

Instructions FOR THE WHOLE YEAR.

P A R T II.

T O M E III.

F O R
L E N T.

B E I N G

Practical Thoughts on the *Epistles*
and *Lessons* from *Ash-Wednesday* to
Tuesday in *Easter-Week*.

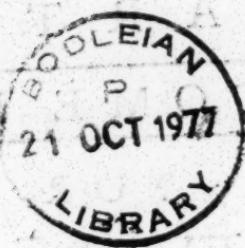
In this Edition are added the *Gospels* in
their proper Places, for *Ash-Wednesday*,
the Sundays, *Maundy-Thursday*, *Easter-
Monday* and *Easter-Tuesday*.

FAITHFULLY CORRECTED.

Printed for T. MEIGHAN, in *Drury-Lane*.
M DCC XXXVI.

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THE PREFACE.

IT is needless to entertain the Reader here with Proofs of the Institution of Lent being Primitive and Apostolical: Those, who are vers'd in Antiquity, may trace the Steps of it through all Ages of the Church; and for such whose Leisure or Learning is not sufficient to carry them so far back, they may abundantly satisfy their Curiosity in this Point, by perusing Books on this Subject; and tho' I could suggest Variety of Catholick Authors to this Purpose, yet I shall at present recommend one of another Communion; which being in English, may be more acceptable to the ordinary Reader, and that is the learned Volume of The Paschal or Lent Fast: Publish'd in the Year 1662, by Peter Gunning, D. D. afterwards Bishop of Ely, who, in the very Title, styles it Apostolical and Perpetual; and throughout the whole, proves the Church to have observ'd this Lent Fast ever since the Times of the Apostles:

that they deliver'd it to the Faithful, and observ'd it themselves, p. 24, 26, and this by the Consent of the Generality of the Fathers in the first seven Ages after their Decease; and therefore concludes it to be a Tradition Apostolical, p. 131.

And now having mention'd this Book, wherein are so fully treated all those Points, which of course ought to make up the Preface to the following Instructions, I think I shall not at all impose on the Reader, if I present him here with an Abstract of this Treatise, and I am confident do no Difservice to myself, since the full Prospect of Antiquity, as there given, must necessarily dispose him to be more favourable to all that follows.

This learned Author, then, having filled near an hundred Pages with the concurring Testimonies of all Antiquity, witnesssing the Paschal Fast of Lent to have been ever observ'd in the Church, as from the Apostles, and from Evangelical Instruction, then sets down the Rules of Lent, or principal Conditions necessary to render this a Fast acceptable to GOD, and such as he has chosen.

These Conditions or Rules of a Christian Fast, p. 173, are, 1st, That our Fasting be as the Church at first design'd it, a great Instrument of our great Work of Repentance from our Sins; of judging ourselves, that we be not judged of the Lord; of more instant

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stant mortifying all sinful Lusts and Affections, forasmuch as Christ has suffered for us, and we, if with him we suffer in the Flesh, must cease from Sin. 2dly, That our Fast be truly fasting, not a Commutation only of our usual Diet for other delightful Fulness, Refections and Pleasures. 3dly, That Fasting be not sever'd from its ancient Company of Watchings, Hard-lyings, Sorrowings, Sequestration of Ornaments, and publick Joyances. 4thly, That in our Fasting our Bowels relent from all hard Oppression of others. 5thly, That it abound in Works of Mercy. 6thly, To make our Fasting subservient to our more instant Prayers, as our Bodies to our Souls; for a Time giving ourselves to attend on Fasting and Prayer, and more frequent hearing of God's Word. 7thly, More particularly take we care in this Time of the Abstinence of Lent, to prepare ourselves for the Lord's Holy Table at Easter, to which it is instituted as a Preparation. Lastly, That all this your Good be not leaven'd with the Leaven of Vain-glory and Hypocrify.

Every one of these Conditions, necessary for the due Observance of Lent, he proves at large, both from Scripture, Consent of Fathers, and the Practice of the Primitive Church; shewing all Fasting to be unprofitable, which is not accompanied with Re-

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penitance, forsaking of Sin, Prayer and good Works ; and that 'tis nothing less than mocking God to abstain from Flesh, and at the same time to indulge the Appetite in other delightful Food ; for that this is dealing deceitfully with the Law-giver, and therefore condemn'd as a great Abuse both by ancient Councils and Fathers, p. 187. That therefore the true Christian Lent ought to be Penitential, by afflicting and bringing down the Body ; as being a Season of joint Fasting and Penance ; wherein not only Publick Offenders, but Secret also, even the whole Congregation, join in Humiliation for their Sins, p. 185 ; and therefore ought not to be observed by Fasting only, but in other Mortifications of Watching, Sackcloth, Hard-tying, Mourning ; for this the Consent of the Universal Church in all the Parts of the Earth has confirm'd, p. 198. And this to answer all the Purposes of Fasting, which he thus describes : Fasting is denying ourselves lawful Refreshments, for having not denied ourselves in unlawful Desires ; a real judging ourselves worthy to be punish'd, that we be not judged ; and afflicting or punishing ourselves (Ezra viii. 21.) judging ourselves also unworthy (and executing on ourselves, for some time, that Judgment) of the wonted Blessings created of God for Man to enjoy, for our former inordinate Enjoyments of them, and

and our other Offences against God, p. 183. Thus he describes Lent to be a Time of accusing, judging and condemning ourselves worthy to be punished, and executing this Judgment on us, that so we escape the severer Judgments of God. Having declar'd these Conditions for the due Observance of Lent out of Antiquity in above forty Pages, he concludes this Point with a Testimony of St. Chrysostom in his Homilies, in which they are all summ'd up together: For what Cause therefore, some may say, do we keep the Fast of these forty Days?---- That in these Days all of us being perfectly purified together by Prayers, and by Alms, and by Fasting, and by whole Nights Watchings, and by Tears, and by Confession, and by all other Things, we may so, according to our Power, with a pure Conscience, come to the Holy Mysteries (the Sacrament) p. 213.

Then to recommend the Observance of Lent more effectually to the Faithful, he sets down, in about twelve Pages, the large Commendations the Primitive Fathers give of Fasting, viz. That Fasting prepar'd Moses for the receiving the Law from the Hand of God; and for his second receiving it, he needed a second Fast: That Samuel and Sampson were the Fruit of their Mothers Fasting; God having prescrib'd it to

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Sampson and his Mother before he was born. By Fasting, Daniel was prepar'd for Heavenly Visions, secur'd from the Lions, and the three Children from the Fire. St. John Baptist's whole Life was one Fast. Our Lord, by Fasting, fortified himself against the Assaults of the Devil. The Apostles were continually, as it were, Fasting. By Fasting the Enemy is overcome; for our Saviour has said concerning the Devil, This kind is not cast out, but by Fasting and Prayer. By voluntary Afflictions, the Flesh dies unto Lusts, and the Spirit is renew'd unto Virtue; Fasting gives Victory against Concupiscence, repels Temptations, takes down Pride, mitigates Anger, and nourishes the Affections of every Good-will unto the Maturity of entire Virtue. Fasting is the Purity, the Heart, the Preservative of the Soul, the Exercise of Spiritual Wrestlers. There are Angels, which in every Church write all those that Fast; neither dares the Insolence of Devils any thing against such as Fast; and the Angels, the Guardians of our Life, do, with more studious Labour, abide with such who have purified their Souls with Fasting. Fasting makes the young Man sober, the old Man reverend, the most fit Dress of Women, a Bridle for those who are in the Flower of their Age, the Custody of Marriage, the Nurse of Virginity. Fasting is
our

our Assimilation unto Angels, it transforms on a sudden all the City, it quiets Noise. In the Time of the Fast, what lascivious Company can have Allowance? Filthy Songs, and outragious Dances, suddenly depart the City, being chased thence by Fasting, as by an austere Judge. Fasting is the Nurse of all good Order, the Mother of Sanctity, the Imitation of Angelical Conversation, Fountain of Temperance, Beginning of Continence, the Serenity of our Souls. This is the Character he gives of Fasting out of St. Ambrose, Leo, Basil, Cyril, Chrysostom; and then in his own Words concludes: Fasting seems the Flower of Temperance, the Chastisement of Intemperance, the Exercise of corrective Justice on ourselves, the cutting off Occasions of Injustice towards others, the Understanding's Clearness, the Will's Emendation; it is the Body of Piety, which serves the Soul and Spirit of inward Godliness; Beati qui lugent, Blessed are those that mourn; and then proceeds to give the Reasons why Fasting, rightly perform'd, deserves such great Praises.

I. For the Honour of the Divine Holiness of God our Father, who, without Respect of Persons, will judge every Man that judgeth not himself; and is most faithful in his Promises of Mercy; we judging ourselves, he will not judge us; we abhorring ourselves

in Dust and Ashes, he will not abhor us.

II. For satisfying God's gracious Will, who will accept much less of corrective Chastisements, when so voluntarily by ourselves adjudg'd and inflicted on ourselves, than otherwise.

III. For the preventing of the Hand of God executing his Anger against our Sins in Temporal Judgments, as we see in the Example of St. Paul, of Ahab and David; and when these cannot be prevented, neither in whole, nor in part, yet even so shall this return into our Bosom for greater Reward hereafter.

IV. It is a great Help and Degree, and external Part of our Contrition (proceeding from the inward) which consists of four Holy Passions in one Compound, viz. a Holy Sorrow for what is past, a Holy Anger and Indignation at ourselves, a Holy Fear of God's Judgments, a Holy Hatred or Detestation of our Sins; now all these four are exercis'd, as well as witness'd, in these Self-afflictions; it is that wise Indignation, and only lawful Revenge of a private Christian, mention'd by St. Paul, 2 Cor. 7. It is a Work of Justice corrective upon ourselves.

V. As it is a wholesome Degree of our Contrition, so it is also of our Confession; it is not a verbal, but real, practical, Confession

feffion in Deeds, an humble Acknowledgment more than by Words only, that we are by our Sins unworthy of God's good Creatures, and of his Blessings (by denying unto ourselves even Food and Pleasures, and Rest and Ornament; in Fastings, Watchings, lying on the Ground, in Sackcloth, &c.) and worthy of his Judgments. It is also a due Confef-
fion, that we suffer justly what we do other-
wise also perhaps from God's own Hand. They humbled themselves, and said, God is Righteous.

VI. It is for our future Emendation, and securing us from returning to the same Sin again, which hath caused us so to smart; the Pleasure whereof we have been inforc'd to avenge on ourselves by so severe Sharpness of Pain or Affliction for Mortification of the Flesh.

VII. Beside the Fear of a repeated Smart, otherwise also available it is, for the better taking off our Hearts from the Love of the World, while we stand so long by our own Counsel, sequester'd from the Contents, Enjoyments, and Blandishments, of the World and Flesh. And so the Mind hath better Leisure, and Temper, and Serenity, to make a truer Judgment and Estimate of the Excellency of Heavenly Things.

VIII. With God, who hath promised to give Grace to the Humble, these Humiliations,

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*for the very Humility thereof and therefrom,
are a powerful Means to obtain his inward
Grace and Guidance, Ezra viii. 21.*

IX. *By them we may procure Deliverances
and Blessings to others also, some way con-
cern'd with us (or more than us perhaps) in
the Dread of some Judgment of God upon
Sin.*

*Here being thus declar'd by this learned
Author at length, 1st, The Authority of this
Holy Institution of Lent: 2dly, The man-
ner of keeping it: 3dly, That being thus
kept, it is a Work to which the Scripture
has directed us, the Church of the Saints
ever practis'd, and God has chosen, and
will reward openly: And lastly, the Reasons
why it is so accepted of God, and profitable
to ourselves, p. 135. He afterwards, in
his Appendix, confirms the whole with the
concurring Sentiments of four Bishops, An-
drews, Cosins, Whitgift and Montague.
And tho' he acknowledges many modern Au-
thors to be of another Opinion, yet I pre-
scribe (says he) against any Number of
Moderns of one smaller Part of the Chris-
tian World, and of one or two Ages
farthest remov'd from Antiquity (except
where Authority of our own Church,
to which we have subscrib'd, doth inter-
pose) such Testimonies, I say, standing
alone by themselves, Antiquity, that ap-
proaches*

proaches nearer the Fountain, not being first heard, both to interpret Scripture, and testify of Tradition (where that is Part of the Controversy) all such weak and trifling Proofs of Arguments from Testimony, I take to be but Tyranny over Mens Judgments, who are bound to none, but to God's Word, who is Truth, and the Church's Witness, whom he has set to be the Pillar of Truth; whose Witness is best learn'd from Antiquity and Universality of Practice, and Consent of her Pastors of the Ages required; and to Submission of Acquiescence to their own Church in such Matters, p. 542. *Excellent Reasoning, had it not been mix'd with that Relenting Parenthesis.*

And now, having here given the Reader a whole Book in the Preface, wherein he is inform'd of every material Point belonging to this Holy Institution, I think I need add no more, but my hearty Wishes, that this Fast were universally observ'd, as here directed; tho', with my Wishes, I offer the pious Reader the following Instructions, which may be some Help for the better Performance of this Duty, in Conformity to its first Institution. They are seasonable Thoughts on the Epistles and Lessons, generally applied to the Obligations of this Time, not as I call my own such; but what I have observ'd, collected,

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collected, and even sometimes translated, out of other Books, as I apprehended them capable of contributing to the Publick Good. They carry not Permissu Superiorum in the Front, but have all the Approbation necessary thus to recommend them, and therefore not to be censur'd on that Score; and if on any other there can be made any just Exception, I appeal to the Reader's Charity for his most favourable Construction; and desire him to do here, as at a plentiful Table, make use of what he likes, and pass by the rest, not forgetting, that 'tis sometimes an ill Stomach or prejudic'd Fancy that gives a Dislike to wholesome Meat; and in this Case, an over-hasty Censure would be his Fault, and not mine; but 'tis what I pardon; and therefore, whenever I stand in need of it, I hope he'll do as much for me.



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INSTRUCTIONS FOR L E N T.

I. Of Shrovetide.

Q. *I* Desire here to be informed concerning the due keeping of Lent, but first let me know what Shrovetide means? And whether the general Practice of Christians at that time be according to the Intention of the Church?

A. Shrovetide was intended as a Preparation for Lent; for this being a most solemn Fast, wherein the Faithful are encouraged by Prayer, Humiliation and Self-denials, to turn away the Anger of God, and make Atonement for their Sins, 'twas very reasonable they should enter into this Course of Penance with due Reflection and

and Preparation. For this End it was designed, on these Days of *Shrovetide*, they should seriously turn their Thoughts to the Work before them, and by an humble Confession so far reconcile themselves with God, as to hope for his Grace for their Assistance, and that their Mortifications and Fastings, thus offered from a clean Heart, might find Acceptance in his Sight.

Q. And is it thus People generally employ this Time?

A. This is the Practice of great Numbers, especially those who best understand their Duty: 'Tis to this Method the Church invites all, and is very careful in giving all Encouragement to the Faithful thus to prepare for *Lent*. For this End, on *Shrove-Sunday*, is read the Gospel of Christ going up to *Jerusalem*, there to be scourged, mocked, spit on, and crucified; that so, by the Consideration of Christ's Suffering for Sin, every Christian, renouncing his evil Ways, may effectually think of seriously applying himself to such Means as may be proper for his having a Part in that general Ransom, and being discharged from his Sins. So that the Design of the Church is, that by the Exercises of Repentance and Piety on those Days, the Faithful should dispose themselves for the due Observance of *Lent*.

But

But now as for the Practice of too many, who then give themselves to all manner of Glutony and Excess, and think they make ill Use of their Time, if they are not swallowing till the Clock striking Twelve, tells them 'tis *Ash-Wednesday* Morning : This is what the Church abhors ; and 'tis most certainly an unwarrantable Custom, built on nothing but the Relicks of Heathenism, and having nothing now to support it, but the Weakness of some, and Vice of others.

For what can be more preposterous, than by Intemperance to prepare for Fasting ? Is not this to go into the Church, to pretend to worship the living God ; but first to stop in the Porch, and offer Sacrifice to Idols ? The Church commands us to keep *Lent*, and in Obedience to her Orders they pretend to chaffise their Sins, and offer up Self-denials for the appeasing the Wrath of God : What then have they to do with Rioting and Intemperance ? Why in the very Entrance of that holy Time do they run back to Infidelity, and, in all manner of Extravagancies, make their shameless Offerings to *Bacchus* ? If they were called to six Weeks Liberty and Prophaneness, Glutony and Drunkenness might be a seasonable Preparation : But being summon-
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ed to Mortification and Fasting, how abominable are these Excesses? Did ever any one, desirous of being reconciled with a Person whom he had injured, make choice of his professed Enemy to become his Advocate? Drunkenness is an Enemy to God, says St. *Basil*; and if thou desirest to make thy Peace with him, fly all manner of Intemperance, for otherwise thou addest new Provocations, and drawest greater Vengeance on thy own Head.

We may conclude then, that this is a Practice to be detested by all serious Christians; and that whatever Pretexts are brought to favour it, they are nothing better than the Flatteries of Weakness, and deceitful Disguises of downright Impiety: And without any great Spirit of Prophecy we may foretel, that such as begin *Lent* with these Extravagancies, however they may observe a Pharisaical Fast, as understanding little of the true Spirit of Penance, will very likely be found with the same unmortified Passions at *Easter*, as were their Directors in the keeping of *Shrovetide*. Whilst other more pious Souls, considering the true Motives for their observing of *Lent*, and the Difficulty of their keeping it well, decline all Occasions of this most scandalous

dalous Intemperance, and wholly turning themselves at this time to the Exercises of Piety and Humiliation, thus endeavour to obtain that Grace which is necessary for the due Performance of the Fast enjoined: And this is to proceed according to the Intention of the Church.

II. Of Lent.

Q. *FOR what Ends is the Fast of Lent commanded to be kept?*

A. There are several. 1. As we are commanded to offer to God the Tents of our Goods, so 'tis but just we should pay him the like Tribute, as to what regards the Time of our Life. And for this End forty Days are set apart, which are, as it were, the Tythe of the whole Year. 2. That Christians falling into many sinful Liberties, and hurtful Excesses throughout the Year, may in this Forty Days Fast, accompanied with Alms and Prayers, have something to offer to God in Expiation and Punishment of their Offences, especially if united to that Satisfaction Christ made on the Cross, in the Name of all Sinners. 3. That by this six Weeks Mortification

tion the Faithful may be duly prepared for the worthy celebrating the Memory of Christ's Passion, and the great Festival of *Easter*. For certainly, to take part in the Cross of the Son of God, is most proper for such as desire with any Advantage to meditate on his Sufferings : And if they think of rising with Christ, how can they do it better, than by suffering with him? For these Reasons has this Fast been ordained ; it having been first sanctified in the Persons of *Moses* and *Elias*, and afterwards by the Son of God, who all fasted forty Days.

Another Reason may be, of the Apostles and Church enjoining this Fast, to put us in mind of that *general Fast*, which is necessary in this our State of Infirmitiy, for the Support of Virtue, and performing due Penance for our Sins. For since our *greatest Danger* arises from the *violent Inclination*, born with us, towards Creatures ; and all our *Offences* are nothing else, but the forsaking our Creator for the Love of these ; there can be no Virtue where there are not resolute Endeavours for the diminishing and checking this *Concupiscence*, by fasting or separating ourselves from those Creatures which are a Snare before us : Hence 'tis a necessary Consequence, that he that loves

loves Pleasure, must deprive himself of Pleasure; he that loves Riches, Gaming or Honours, &c. must here deny himself; because this Separation weakens the Violence of the Impressions those Creatures made on the Soul, and sets it at Liberty to fix itself on better Objects: And in this general Fasting or Privation is the Exercise of solid Virtue. The same is the Method of true Penance; for the general Ground of all our Sins being the immoderate Love of Creatures, what better Atonement can we make than by depriving ourselves of them? Our Sins oblige us to do Penance, and this cannot well be where there is not a sincere Desire of offering some Satisfaction to the Divine Justice in a manner proportioned to our Sins: And what other Proportion like that of punishing by the Privation of Creatures, those very Sins committed in the Enjoyment or Abuse of Creatures?

Thus this *general Fast*, which consists in this Privation or Self-denial, is necessary for all, as the best Satisfaction for past Offences, and as the greatest Security of Virtue, in defending it from those Weaknesses which are the unavoidable Consequences of corrupt Nature, as likewise of all vicious Habits.

Now

Now this Fast of the Church from *certain Meats*, seems intended for the engaging us more strongly in this *general Fast*, which is the separating ourselves from the Objects of our Passions ; for being commanded to deny ourselves *certain Meats*, because through the Course of the Year we too often offend in them, through our Intemperance ; on the same Ground we must conclude it just to practise a like Self-denial in regard of as many Objects as we experience either to be the Occasion or Matter of our Transgressions : And without this the keeping of *Lent* will be but very imperfect.

III. Of the Manner of keeping Lent.

Q. I See then Lent is not an outward Form only ; but that it is to be accompanied with many interior Mortifications : But for my Direction pray tell me what things I am to observe for the keeping it as I ought ?

A. The principal Rules for all Fast-days are, 1. To eat but one Meal a Day, and that not of Flesh, nor of White-Meats, but as allowed ; without taking the Liberty, as some do, of eating Fruit

Fruit betwixt Dinner and Collation, as if this did no Injury to the Fast; and this Meal ought to be managed with such Moderation, that it be not made up of those choice and expensive Dishes which provoke to Gluttony, and seem rather fit for Luxury and Banqueting, than for Fasting and Mortification. How sparingly this ought to be, may be apprehended from the second thing required, which is *giving to the Poor*; all the ancient Fathers supposing so much Frugality on Fast-days, that the Expence being much less than is usual on other Days, there may be something considerable laid by to give to the Poor. But if things be so ordered, that one Meal on a Fast-day costs as much as two on another, let every one's Conscience answer whether this be their Fault or no; and whether the favouring irregular Appetites, with unnecessary and costly Provision, be not too often the Occasion of thus exhausting the Stock of the Poor. The third and chief Thing on all Fast-days, is to keep a more than ordinary Watch on the Soul, so as to avoid all Sin, and the Occasions of it; and employ the time, as far as Circumstances will permit, in Praying, Reading, and doing good Works. These are the principal Rules for

for the due Observance of *Lent*, and other Fast-days.

IV. *What Dispensations in these Rules of Lent.*

AS to the first of these Rules, that is of eating one Meal a Day, and that not of Flesh, there's a Necessity of dispensing with many on account of Sicknes, Infirmitie, and other Circumstances. And here, while many are indiscreetly rigorous with themselves, and far greater Numbers too indulgent, I can give no other Direction than for every one, whose Case is not evident, to have the Judgment of some honest and conscientious Physician, or some other experienced Person; and laying his Determination before his spiritual Director, then accordingly to desire his Dispensation. For tho' Physicians, &c. may declare what is necessary for Health; yet none can dispense with the Precepts of the Church, but the Pastors of it.

Q. *Then being regularly exempted from Fasting, they are not obliged to the Observance of Lent?*

A. As far as they are dispensed with, so far they are at Liberty, and no farther. Hence it may be the Case of some,

some, for particular Reasons, to have leave to eat Flesh at Dinner ; and yet still be so far tied to the Rule of Fasting, as not to exceed one Meal in the Day : Whilst others, upon other Indispositions, may be wholly exempted from this Rule of *Lent*. But however it be, these ought not to forget that it is *Lent* still ; but consider 'tis a Time of chastising Sin, a Time of humbling Sinners, and disposing them for the finding Mercy with God ; and as they have a Concern in this, so they ought to be sollicitous not to lose the Benefits of this Time ; but being disabled from using the ordinary Methods, not to be wanting at least in such other Ways, which may be most proper, according to their Circumstances, of coming to the same End, that is, in doing Penance for their Sins, and using all Endeavours for obtaining the Mercy of God.

Let them therefore look on themselves, as the Time requires, to be in a State of Penance ; and keep that strict Guard, as not to permit in themselves any thing that is not truly agreeable to that State. How many Mortifications and Self-denials might they thus find every Day to offer up to Almighty God ? 'Tis but carefully distinguishing betwixt *Necessity* and *Humour*, betwixt *Duty* and *Self-love* ; and these

will present themselves in good Plenty. How many might there be in the Point of Diversions, as to Cards, Plays, Visits, Conversation? How many as to unnecessary Expences? How many as to the Government of the Senses, the Tongue, the Eyes, &c. as to the Passions, in prudently moderating them; in passing by Injuries; in quietly submitting to Contradictions, with infinite other Occasions, which daily offer; and in the good Use of which, a Person, tho' incapable of Fasting, might yet answer all the Purposes of *Lent*, and find Acceptance in the Sight of God.

As to the second Rule of *Lent*, which is giving Alms, there can be no other Dispensation, but only Inability: For as to all other Persons, whom God has bless'd with Plenty, the Holy Fathers unanimously agree, that relieving the Poor is so essentially necessary to their Fasting, that without it they judge it almost unprofitable and fruitless before Almighty God. St. *Augustine* is very positive in this, *Serm. 65. de Temp.* Imagine not, says he, that Fasting alone is sufficient to heal the Wounds of Sin: No, you must accompany it with Alms; and while you chastise yourself, be careful to bring Comfort to your Neighbour: Then will you find

find the Benefit of your Austerities, when you open your Bosom, and pour forth your Heart in the relieving others, &c. St. Ambrose, St. Chrysostom, &c. all concur in this. But now as for such whose Stock will not reach to this, yet may they have still some other sort of Alms wherewith to assist their Neighbours in Distress. To visit the Poor, Afflicted or Sick, is a great Charity; to read some good Book to them, to give them good Advice, encourage them to Patience, &c. to instruct them when ignorant; (and who is not ignorant in those Circumstances?) is a very considerable Alms. These sort of Charities then ought to be the Exercise of every good Christian, especially in *Lent*; and such as cannot give other Alms, ought to be more diligent and bountiful in these.

As to the third Rule, which is of avoiding Sin, and its Occasions, and living virtuously in *Lent*; this admits of no Dispensation, but is absolutely necessary for as many as desire to fast like Christians, and not as Pharisees. So that all those, who strictly observe the Direction of the Church, as to *fasting from Meat*, and at the same time go on in the Track of their accustom'd Liberties, taking no Care to *fast from Sin*, must be certainly condemn'd

for Pretenders to Christianity, and not esteem'd true Professors of it ; they are unprofitable Fasters, and their best Character is, of being like the unhappy *Israelites*, after their Separation from the House of *Judah*, who at the same time were Worshippers of the true God, and of Idols too.

For this Reason it is, Almighty God, in Scripture, summoning the People, by his Prophets, to Fasting, requires of them likewise a true Change of Heart and Conversion from Sin ; and that on these Terms they are to find Mercy : *Be converted to me* (says our Lord) *with your whole heart, in fasting, in weeping, and mourning; rend your hearts, and not your garments, and return to the Lord your God, for he is good and merciful,* Joel ii. 12, 13. A Conversion of the Heart, and forsaking of Sin, is to be joined with Fasting, and then Mercy may be expected : But Fasting alone, without this, see how it is rejected by Almighty God, *Isaiah* 58 ; where he expressly declares to the *Israelites*, that while they pretend to humble themselves in Fasting, and at the same time mortify not their own Wills, but walk in their own perverse Ways, in their Ways of Contention and Strife, and Severity against their Neighbour, &c. that such

such is not a Fast to be regarded, or any ways acceptable to him: And that, except they turn from their Sins, and let their Fasts be accompanied with Works of Mercy, of Piety and Goodness, their Fasting and Praying would be in vain.

This same Doctrine is urg'd every-where by the Holy Fathers. The Christian Fast, says St. *Ambrose*, which is a Help to our Salvation, consists in this; that while we mortify our Bodies by Abstinence from Meats, we be careful to avoid all Sins which can defile our Souls. Let us then early in the Morning beg Mercy for past Offences; and watching over ourselves, desire Grace to offend no more: Let our chief Employment all the Day be in Prayer, and reading good Books: Let no worldly Actions interrupt the Course of our good Works: Let neither Gaming, nor Hunting, &c. divert us from our conversing with God, *Serm. 33.* Christian Fasts, says St. *Augustine*, ought to be observ'd more according to the Spirit, than the Flesh. The principal Part of our Fasting, is to abstain from Sin, that so we fall not under the Reproach of God, as the *Jews* did in their Fasting, *Serm. 172. de Temp.* To abstain from certain Meats, says St. *Basil*, is not the true Fast, except we join with it a regular and good

Life, and shew it in our Words and Conversation. Think not, says St. *Chrysostom*, as many do, that Fasting is only to abstain from eating: 'Tis not this that is enjoined us, but that in Fasting from Meats that are forbidden, we at the same time avoid every thing that can be prejudicial to our Salvation, and spend our Time in the Exercises of Virtue, *Ch. 8. in Gen.*

Thus you see from Scripture and Fathers, that however there may be Dispensations, as to the other Parts of *Lent*, there can be none as to this; but that all are alike oblig'd to it; and that whatever Rigours are used in the Points of Fasting, 'tis all but Mockery and Pageantry, except Care be taken at the same time to mortify all disorder'd Passions and Irregularities, whether in Thoughts, Words, or Actions. For, if we abstain, says St. *Augustine*, from Things that in themselves are lawful, how much more Reason have we to abstain from all Sins, which are at all Times unlawful.

V. What Abstinence as to Wine, &c.

THIS evident in Antiquity, that Wine was no less forbidden on Fasting Days than Flesh: But for many Ages it has been allow'd, whether in Consideration of human Weakness, or for the Support of Age, or because Water was not every-where wholesome. But since there is this Indulgence of the Church, it must certainly be lawful to make use of it. But then this ought to be done with Moderation, to comply with the Necessity of Nature, as *Timothy* did by St. *Paul's* Order, and not to satisfy the Importunity of a disorder'd Appetite. For certainly, as often as Christians meet together in *Lent*, or other Fast Days, and give themselves, as is too usual, to Mirth, Pastime and Drinking, tho' there be no such Thing as coming to the Height of Excess, yet this is absolutely contrary to the Design of the Church; because tho' all this be consistent with one Meal a Day, and so is no direct Breach of the first Rule of *Lent*; yet inasmuch as it is an indulging of an ill Habit, the yielding to a corrupt, if not vicious Inclination, the Occasion of un-

profitable, and even prophane Discourse, of ill Example to others, an unnecessary Expence, a Los of Time, a dulling of the Spirits, an indisposing of the Soul, and making it unfit for Prayer, and other Works of Piety ; 'tis most certainly contrary to the other two Rules, and makes void all the good Intentions of the Church : Which designing *Lent* for Mortification and Penance, and the retrenching all Vice, cannot but look on those as useless, ungovernable, and unsound Members, who thus abuse it in following their Passions, and turning it to Idleness, Prodigality and Excess ; and are therefore guilty of a great Injustice to themselves, as being wanting in a great Duty they owe to their own Souls ; whilst, being commanded to use Means for the mastering their own Corruptions, and satisfying the Justice of God, whom they have offended, they so manage it, as even to add to their Evils, to promote what Delights, and give new Provocations to Heaven ; and thus unhappily render themselves uncaple of those Advantages the Church design'd for them, and judg'd necessary for their obtaining God's Mercy, and opening their Way to Salvation.

VI. *What Allowances, as to Collation.*

Antiquity knew nothing of Collation, besides those spiritual Conferences, used after *Complin*, or in the Evening, for the Refreshment of their Souls; but as for the eating at Night, now in Practice, 'twas then unknown; and has been since permitted, in Consideration only of human Weakness, which, being favourably judg'd as generally not sufficient to hold out the four and twenty Hours with one Meal, has therefore the Allowance of a small Repast at Night for its Support. And it being thus understood in the Nature of a Dispensation, this may serve to direct the Faithful what Measures they are to take in a Thing in which the Practice is so very different. For being thus consider'd as a Condescension to human Weakness, it ought to be so far, and in that manner made use of, as the Necessity of every one's Constitution seems to require. And from this Head it is plain, how far they transgress in this Point, who, at Collation, have a Table set forth with all manner of Varieties, the choicest Fruits and Sweet-meats, &c. which, in their Delicacy and

Expence, are very unsuitable to the Frugality and Severity of the Time; and are only a Contrivance of those, who, employing their Wits in the Aid of their Appetites, endeavour to elude all the pious Institutions of the Church, whilst keeping within the Bounds of what they think is allow'd, are however so costly and curious in preparing it, that they seem rather to consult what most flatters their Palate, than what Necessity requires, or may be seasonable to relieve Nature, without feeding Luxury and Concupiscence.

On the same Grounds likewise, is the Temper of those to be reproved, who are ever enquiring the Extremity of what may be permitted of every thing on Fasting Days, as to *Quantity* and *Quality*. For, tho' this shews some Desire of not transgressing, yet it expresses so great an Inclination of favouring the Appetite as much as may be, that they seem little sensible of that true Spirit of Penance, proper for that Time, which is not for enquiring how much they may spare, but how far they may, in Prudence, punish their Sins. And therefore, tho' there may be several Things not absolutely forbidden on those Days, as *Chocolate*, &c. and other Things customary in many Places, as *Gruels*, *Tarts*, &c. yet certainly to

to go farther in these Things, than Necessity of Constitution requires, is not expedient; because on Days instituted for Mortification, 'tis very reasonable we should mortify ourselves; and not seek to gratify our Appetites, when our only Business is to make Nature hold out.

I say not this to raise Scruples in any, but to make them so sensible of their Duty, that they may not lose those considerable Advantages the Church designs for them in their observing *Lent*; but keep their Eye, the whole Course of this Time, on that principal End proposed to them, of punishing and taking just Revenge on their past Transgressions, for the satisfying God's Justice; and likewise so order their Self-denials, as to render them *Medicinal*, by moderating all Passions, and mastering Concupiscence, thus to prevent the like Disorders for the future. 'Tis to these Ends is to be directed the whole Body of their Actions, throughout the Time of *Lent*; by these is to be regulated their Eating, Drinking, Conversation, &c. and nothing to be sought or allow'd of, which bears not some Proportion with them. 'Tis from this Rule Christians must take their Measure of whatever they do in this Time: And a very passing Glance will suffice to inform any

any one that is serious, how much is to be cut off of what is so generally practised, not only as to the Excess of Dinners and Collations, but as to Entertainments, Drinking, Diversion, Gaming, Plays, Idleness, with much more of this kind; which are wholly unsuitable to the Spirit of the Church, and contrary to all the Ends she proposes: Inasmuch as they are the Suggestions of Self-love and corrupt Sense, and are most effectual for the strengthening all worldly Inclinations: And what then have these to do with the Time of Penance and *Lent*?

This Consideration I earnestly recommend to all, as being not only every one's private Interest, but even the common Concern of Christianity, to bring it more into Practice than it is. For certainly there is scarce any one Primitive and Apostolical Institution more in Decay than this, whilst the Precept and Name remaining, there's little as to the Substance and first Design of Fasting left. Whoever reads the Collects, and other Prayers of the Church, in Time of *Lent*, and observes what frequent mention is there made of *chastising the Body*, of *macerating the Flesh*, *punishing or mortifying ourselves* for the Remedy of Sin, for the healing of all our Wounds caused by Excess, and rooting

ing out our *Vices*, &c. will easily perceive the Sense of our pious Predecessors as to this holy Institution. But where is this to be found in the general Practice of most, who so order their Eating and Drinking, as not to be sensible of any *chastising* or *macerating*; and so go on in the Course of their usual Liberties, that there's more Danger of opening new Wounds, than healing the old? And is it to go on thus? What's then become of the Primitive Spirit? 'Tis certainly brought into a narrow Compass of faithful Souls, who, breaking through all present Abuses, look back to the first Institution; who make *Lent* a Time of Penance and Piety; who are discreetly severe in Punishing, diligent in Watchng, fervent in all Exercises, liberal in Giving, and every Way solicitous to be just to God and themselves; in omitting no Oportunity in this Time of honouring their Maker, and benefiting their own Souls. 'Tis these we must endeavour to imitate; for this end I have given these short Instructions as to Fasting in its whole Extent: Now I will give some Help as to a seasonable Entertainment of Piety, and hope it will be beneficial to those that use it.

Ash-Wednesday.

ON this Day Ashes are blessed, and the Sign of the Cross made by the Priest on the Forehead of all the Faithful, saying to each, *Memento, Homo, quia pulvis es, et in pulverem reverteris: Remember, Man, thou art Dust, and unto Dust thou shalt return:* That so being made sensible of what they are at present, and what they are to be, they may enter upon Lent with the Spirit of Humility; resolve to punish their past Sins; not bearing the Presumption of Dust and Ashes having been in Rebellion against their Lord; and firmly conclude to prepare, by a Course of Piety and Penance, against that Day, when the Soul shall be summon'd before its Judge, and the Body return to Dust.

L E S S O N.

Joel, C. 2. V. 12. ends V. 19.

TURN to me (says our Lord) with all your heart, in fasting, and weeping, and mourning. Hear how the Mercy of God calls upon us this Day. He knows we

we are in Sin ; he knows all those dreadful Consequences which attend Sinners : That Hell is waiting to devour them ; that their Portion is to be banish'd Heaven, to be Companions with Devils, to be in Misery and Torments for all Eternity. Therefore the Voice of Mercy calls aloud after them this Day : *Turn to me*, says our Lord ; forsake your perverse Ways, that so you may escape all those Evils that are before you.

But how must we return to Thee ? *With all your heart, in fasting, in weeping, and mourning.* These are the Conditions to be perform'd by as many as desire to lay hold of the Mercy that is offer'd. We must turn then to God ; and because we have many Ways of turning to him, which are very unprofitable ; as by our weak Desires, our imperfect Repentance, our barren Resolutions, our speculative and fruitless Devotions, by which, and many other Ways, we make a Shew of doing our Duty, and seem to turn to God ; but, in reality, deceive the World, and ourselves : Therefore it is, we are now put in mind, not to content ourselves with these imperfect Attempts, but sincerely to turn to God with all our Hearts. And believe me, Christians, this is none of the easiest Tasks ; since it includes an entire

entire Change of the Heart ; a turning it from all those Creatures whatever, which are the Occasions of our Sins ; a Detestation of all those Customs, Practices, Actions, Discourses, by which we generally offend ; a Hatred of what we naturally love ; a Flying from what we most desire ; a daily Practice of what we most dislike ; and continual Endeavours to overthrow and destroy that in us, which our corrupt Nature has made most dear to us, that is, our own Will. All this, and much more of this kind, the *turning to God with all our Hearts*, includes and necessarily supposes. Now how often may we profess at our Prayers, that we love God ? How often may we strike our Breasts, and say, we repent and detest our Sins for God's sake, and desire to leave them ; and yet never thus truly turn to God with all our Hearts ? And why, because we have a Way of saying Things over, and making Protestations of what we seemingly purpose and resolve to do, without ever seriously considering what we profess, or reflecting on the Means necessary for performing what we undertake ; we too easily content ourselves with Words and Forms, and turning our Thoughts to God ; but very seldom take the Pains sincerely to turn our Hearts to him. 'Tis these lame

Devo-

Devotions, these shuffling and treacherous Performances of your Duty in a Matter of so great Concern, the Church desires you now to call to mind with all the Seriousness possible, and so to make use of this Holy Time; we begin this Day, as in it to make amends for all past Neglects, to repair all the Breaches of your Souls, to regain the Ground you have lost, and, by sincerely turning to God with all your Hearts, satisfy for the many Times you have so deceitfully turned to him.

But for the carrying on this Work the better, we are here commanded to add *Fasting* to these our Endeavours; and we cannot doubt but he that requires it, knows how necessary it is for us, it being no other than God himself: And I cannot but fear, 'tis for Want of this we so often miscarry, and even repent but by halves. The Reason seems plain; for, on the one side, the Evils, to which we are subject, are so very stubborn, and our ill Habits so strengthened within us, that they will not forsake us, unless forced away by Violence, and even driven out, as the Traders were from the Temple, by our Redeemer, that is, by Scourges. And then we, on the other side, are so favourable to these our own Misfortunes, and find them so agreeable to our Corruption, that tho' we are easily brought

brought to declare in their Disfavour, and in Words to renounce them, yet we seldom heartily make War against them, except we first smart for't, and, by our *feeling*, are made sensible how great Evils they are. Hence it is, for the turning with all our Hearts to God, we are commanded to fast, to mortify, and punish ourselves; to the end, that by these Chastisements we may apprehend something of the Grievousness of Sin; that we may begin to be in earnest: And, when we perceive what our Sins cost us, we may not be so easy in relapsing into them again. 'Tis the Cheapness of our Repentance makes us so soon stand in need of a new one; whereas, did we punish according to Justice every Sin we commit, we should stand more on our Guard, and not so easily open our Arms to that which brings such a Sting at the End of it. We are not yet so perfect, as to be moved altogether by Love to our Amendment; no, our servile Nature obliges us to make use of Fear too; and we must feel the Punishment of Sin, for our more effectual avoiding it: And 'tis this we are called to.

Let us then this Day begin to enter into this Method prescribed us by God himself: And if we have hitherto too often

often offended our Creator, to please and gratify ourselves; let us now, by denying ourselves, endeavour to satisfy for those Offences. If an indulgent Ease, in yielding to our own Inclinations, has been the Occasion of our Sins; let now a discreet Severity be the Punishment of them: Let the general Rule of this holy Time be to seek not what may please, but what may punish. And if Nature should grieve, and be uneasy, in being thus contradicted, let her grieve on, and be troubled; 'tis fit it should be so, for as her Delight has been in our Crimes, so her Grief will be at our Amendments: The more she grieves, the greater Sign it is of our having yielded to her too much; and convinces us of the Necessity we are under of contradicting her now. Let us be exact then in our Fasting, tho' Nature likes it not; let us bridle our Inclinations, tho' Nature spurs them forward; let us fight against our Passions, tho' Nature encourages them: Let us on every side take Part with Justice, and strive to punish that which justly deserves it. For who knows but God will turn favourably to us, and pardon our Offences. But let us then add Mourning to our Fasts, and every Day renew our Sorrow for our Sins; let us, from the Consideration of an offended

fended God, and our own Unworthiness, endeavour daily to draw Tears of Contrition, and the Sighs of an humble Heart ; let this Practice be the constant Companion of our Fasts, that so we may hope for Pardon. And why should we not begin this even now ? Humble then your Souls before our Lord, and cry aloud to him for Mercy : *Parce Domine, Parce Populo tuo ; Spare us, O Lord, Spare thy People :* Cast us not off for ever : We have finned, we have done unjustly ; but behold now from this Moment, we desire to return to Thee with all our Hearts, in fasting, in weeping, and mourning. Deal not with us, O Lord, according to the Sins we have committed, nor punish us according to our Iniquities ; Remember not our past Offences ; but let thy Mercies make haste to prevent us, for we are poor and miserable. Help us, O God, our Salvation ; for the Glory of thy Name deliver us, and shew us Mercy in the Pardon of our Sins.

Aſſ-Wednesday.

G O S P E L.

Matt. C. 6. V. 16. ends V. 21.

LAY up to yourselves treasures in heaven. A reasonable Advice for all those, who believe an Eternity to come ; for if after this Life we are to enter into a State that shall have no End, is it not just we should make Provision for it ? since the same Faith, which informs us of that State, likewise assures us, that we can expect nothing there, but everlasting Poverty, if we provide not against it, by sending Treasures before us. Our Time of being in this Life cannot be long ; and yet how great is our Sollicitude, in laying Stores for a Defence against Necessity and Misfortunes ? This Care is reasonable, because of the many Uncertainties of this Life ; and if we come to want, we know not how we shall bear it, or what Assistance we shall then find for our Relief ; and therefore the best Discretion is to be industrious, in making timely Provision against all Accidents. What then ought
to

to be our Care, in regard of the Life to come? We believe that to be eternal; we believe the Miseries of it intolerable; we believe there can no other Way be prevented, but by our prudent Management of this Life, and by the Treasures we send before us; and that if we fail in this, so as to die unprovided, it will not then be possible for any Friend to help us. Is it not this we believe? And can there then be a more seasonable Advice, than what the Church this Day gives us from the Mouth of Christ himself; *Lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven?* It is he gives it, who best knows the Necessities of the Life to come, and what will then be the Misery of careless and unprovided Souls, who, putting this to the hazard, certainly run into them: There is great Mercy therefore in the Advice, and the Neglect of it must be a Contempt of Mercy; and such, that whatever be the Reputation of Christians, as to this World, they can be no better than Fools, as to Eternity, if they do not follow it.

See then, Christians, how your Accompts stand; have you Treasures already laid up in Heaven; or, are you there in Debt? All the Disorders of your past Life, all the Sins of Pride, Self-love, Sensuality, Intemperance, Prodigality, all the Neglect of Eternity,

Eternity, with the rest unknown, what must these be reckon'd ? These are no other Treasures, but of Wrath ; they are so many Debts, and who knows whether they do not yet stand in full against you, notwithstanding all your supposed Repentance ? And what then, if you should be summon'd out of this Life ; and now, as you are to begin Eternity ? Can you with Reason hope, you shall find your Treasures already laid up, such as will be your Defence against everlasting Misery ?

This is the Concern of the Church at present ; who, sensible of the great Neglect of her Children, like a careful Mother now calls upon you, that by present Industry you would now lay up Treasures, and prevent the Mischiefs of all your past ill Management. Now you enter upon a Time proper for discharging old Debts, and laying up Treasures in Heaven.

You have an Opportunity, in the Ceremony of this Day, of humbling yourselves before God, and making an Acknowledgment of your being nothing better than sinful Dust. If this be perform'd with a Sense of true Humility, such as ought to be the Fruit now of your past Sins ; how might this contribute, *First*, to the cancelling all the Debts contracted by Pride, Vanity, Self-love, Stubbornness,

Arro-

Arrogancy, Presumption, with infinite other Branches of this so unhappily fruitful Root? Give but one serious Glance at these, and see if the Horror of them, arising from the Consideration of contemptible Dust, that has been thus blindly presumptuous, and of the infinite Majesty of a powerful and loving God, against whom it has rebelliously lifted up its Head, be not enough now to oblige you to humble yourselves, in the Confession of a real Unworthiness, such as ought to cast you, in your own Thoughts, beneath all that is created, and fix such a Sense of your Misery, as may be a Bar against Pride for the time to come.

Then, *Secondly*, how might this be the Foundation of a Treasure in Heaven, since God has sufficiently manifested how acceptable true Humility is to him; how powerful it is, in drawing down Plenty of Heavenly Blessings; and that, as it obliges him to be favourable, so likewise to prepare Seats of Glory for those, who thus, from the Sense of his infinite Mercies, and their own Sins, acknowledge their Ingratitude under present Blessings, and their Unworthiness of all future Happiness.

Begin

Begin then, Christians, thus to pay old Debts, and lay up a Treasure; and see daily to encrease it by the Exercises of this Holy Time. Fasting will encrease it, Prayer will encrease it, Alms will encrease it, Works of Mercy and Justice will encrease it, all manner of Self-denials will encrease it. But then all these ought to be undertaken in Obedience to God's Will, and offer'd to him; thus he will own them as deposited in his Hands, and one Day will give a faithful Account of the Trust. To undertake and perform them in this manner, is therefore to be a principal Part of your Care; for otherwise, they may only serve to encrease the Debt, instead of becoming a Treasure. If you Fast, Pray, and give Alms, as the *Pharisees* did, to gain Reputation with Men; this will not be received by God, but be rejected by him. If you go on in the common Track of the World, which has perverted all the Pious Institutions of God and his Church, mixing Sense and Appetite with all it undertakes, and turning the Frugality of *Lent*, into the grateful Entertainments of Prodigality and Gluttony, where will your Reward be, but with the World? If you be not watchful against the Occasions of Sin, but go on in all your wonted Liberties, such as are most indulgent to

Corruption, such as feed and enflame it ; if you cut not off your idle and unnecessary Expences, both of Money and Time, but still gratify Inclination with what ought to be the Support of your Souls in Retirement, and of the Poor in a Charitable Relief ; if Vanity, Extravagance and Humour are as industriously favour'd in *Lent*, as formerly, where will your Treasure be, when all Accounts being made up, you have been only so civil to Heaven, as to compliment it with a Ceremony, but have made it at the same time your Business to give Encouragement to all that, which was contrary to the Interest of Heaven ?

What therefore must you do, but consider yourselves as Criminals, condemn'd by the Justice of God, and yet with the favour of some Time allow'd you, for reversing the Sentence ? Such are you to reckon this Time, we this Day begin ; and are not you then so to undertake the Exercises of it, that they may be available for this End ? If you have a true Sense of your past Offences, and so Fast, that it may be a Punishment of the Offenders ; if you own Time mispent, and now labour to redeem it ; if you acknowledge the Danger of your Passions, and by due Self-denials endeavour to overcome them ; if you

you confess the Divine Justice provok'd against you, and by Prayer, Alms and Tears, are sollicitous to turn away the Wrath of God from you, you have, in this Method, just Hopes, from the Promises and Mercy of God, of accomplishing what you desire. God himself has given the Encouragement in so many Sinners; who, by this way, have found favour with him; and taking the Advantage of such a Reprieve, which is now granted you, have not only prevented the Execution of Judgment; but, through the Divine Goodness, heap'd up to themselves Treasures of Mercy. Grant us all, O God, thy Grace; that as we experience thy Goodness in the Time thou yet givest us for Repentance, so we may make such a Use of this Time, as to obtain Pardon of our Sins, and, at our Death, find such a Treasure laid up, as may secure us, through thy Infinite Mercy, against all the Dangers of everlasting Misery.

*Thursday before the First Sunday
in Lent.*

L E S S O N.

Isaiah C. 38. V. 1. ends V. 6.

THE Prophet Isaiah came to Hezekiah and said to him, *Thus saith our Lord; Put thy House in Order, for thou shalt die, and not live.* This Sentence of Death is pronounc'd against every one, and the Day is certainly fix'd of our going out of this World: But is our House in Order? Are our Souls truly dispos'd to submit to this Sentence? Happy they who have this Work done beforehand: What a Comfort will it be, when the Day of Departure comes! 'Tis this Happiness the Church, a Pious Mother, designs for all her Children: This Day they have Notice given them, like *Hezekiah's*, that they must die, and not live. 'Tis now she bids them put their House in Order, and employ this Holy Time in preparing their Souls against the Summons comes.

And how can they better prepare, than by the usual Self-denials prescrib'd in *Lent?* By Death we are to be separated from all Creatures;

Creatures ; and those will most certainly with greatest Ease submit to this, who, in their Life-time, learn to bear this Separation, by denying themselves the use of many things, to which their Nature seems strongly to incline them. They who do thus die by degrees, and thus separating themselves from Creatures, will find less Difficulty, when their general Separation comes ; for having practised every Day the parting with some, they will not be so strangely surpriz'd when they are commanded to part with all.

The greater Misfortune will be of those, who having liv'd a Life of Liberty and Ease, and so generally indulged themselves on every side, till the World and Creatures have gain'd an entire Possession of their Hearts. For what a Confusion must it be, when, at the approach of Death, they must, against their Wills, be torn from all, who of themselves have not known the Way of leaving any ? And how great will their Misery be, who carrying these violent Affections with them, shall find even these become their Torment, in having an eternal Desire of Creatures, join'd with an eternal Separation from them ? Others there may be whose Affections are not so criminal as these, but still, exceeding all the bounds

of Moderation, are far from being Innocent ; and if they depart this Life, with their Souls in this Disorder, what afflicting Delays will they find in their expected Happiness ; and what lasting Sufferings must they undergo before they are truly purified and fitted for Heaven ?

O ! how will both these Sorts, when the Hour of Death draws near, miserably bewail their Misfortune, of being so ill prepar'd for't ? How will they then sensibly apprehend the ill Consequences of all their irregular and misplaced Affections, and then too late begin to wish they had sooner practised the Lesson of Dying, and learn'd by degrees to die to Creatures, before they were thus in good earnest to be snatch'd from them ? 'Tis this Anguish of expiring Souls, the Church, in true Compassion, desires to prevent ; and for this end now calls on all her Children effectually to undertake that Work, which they will at that time most certainly wish to have done. She bids them now prepare their House, put all in Order, that so, when the Hour comes, they may with Joy submit, and be wholly free from racking Fears, and those tormenting Thoughts of being then found unprepar'd.

And

And thou, my Soul, who readest or hearest this, how far art thou concern'd in this Affair? How dost thou resolve upon the Practice? Believe me, thy Turn will come when Death shall seize thee; and dying well is not the easiest Task. If thou puttest it to the Venture, and should'st then miscarry, canst thou step back and try it over again? If this can't be, is it not a Madness to run the Hazard of Eternity, and let thy present Neglect cast thee into everlasting Misery, which now is in thy own Power to prevent? Rather chuse to prepare, and learn beforehand what it is to die.

'Tis now thou art call'd to practise something of it: Thou art now to Fast: Fast then from those things the Church forbids, and force thyself for a time at least to die to them. Separate thyself likewise from all such Objects as have either Sin or Danger in them; and if this be uneasy to thee, think it no great Unhappiness, since this is the most assur'd Means of escaping everlasting Woe. And if this seems now a Task of Difficulty, will it not be then a greater, when thou shalt be forced by Death to abandon all, and have no other Prospect before thee, but of that never-ending Misery, which is to be the just Punishment of all thy

past Neglects? Consider this now, and put it not off to thy own sad Experience, to make thee understand it better: Chuse rather now to put thy House in Order, and from this Day begin to die.

*Friday before the First Sunday
in Lent.*

L E S S O N.

Isaiah C. 58. V. 1. ends V. 9.

THIS is the Fast I have chosen. We are just entring upon Lent, wherein we are oblig'd to fast; and tho' it may be no great Difficulty so to discharge this Duty by an outward Observance of every Part of it, as to be esteem'd obedient Sons of the Church; yet 'tis not so easy to keep it a Fast acceptable to God, and make it such as he has chosen. The Jews fasted, and were wanting in no sort of exterior Mortification, either of Sackcloth and Ashes, or any thing else that could possibly afflict; and expecting God's Mercy and Favour as the Effect of their Fasting, behold they are wholly disappointed; for God neither hears their Prayers, nor has any

any regard to their Rigours, so that, as People surpriz'd, they cry out, *Why have we Fasted, and thou seest it not? have punish'd ourselves, and thou regard'st it not?*

Thus they found no Fruits of all they did. And by the Mouth of his Prophet God gives the Reason, *Behold,* says he, *in the Day of your Fasting you are found doing your own Wills:* And so goes on, charging them with their *Debates, Contentions, Oppressions, Quarrelling, &c.* which they took no care to amend: But whilst they fasted outwardly, they still went on in their own perverse Ways, without due Endeavours to reform them.

And was this the Fast God had chosen? No: Such Fasting as this is the Fast of Hypocrites; he protests against it, and declares they are to expect no Fruit of their Labours, as long as they go on in this Method. And is all their Fasting then now vain and fruitless too, who in time of *Lent*, or other Fasts, are careless of correcting those Errors and Failings to which they are subject? Do all those fast in vain, who being of a passionate, quarrelsome or revengeful Temper, give liberty to their Inclinations; and while they regulate their Diet, take no Pains to moderate their Passions? Yes, God himself hath said it, that as long as Christians go

on *doing their own Wills*, walking on in their own Ways, in the Ways of their corrupt Nature, indulging their dangerous and vicious Humours and are more concern'd to please themselves, than to govern their Inclinations, in order to please him, and obey his Commands, the Fasts of these are to no purpose ; are an empty Ceremony ; regarded it may be by Men, but of no Power with Heaven, either to move Compassion, or obtain Mercy.

For what can the Fasts of those be, who on these Days of Penance have the Cry of their own Extravagancies ascending up to Heaven against them ; whose Swearing, Cursing, Prophanations are heard aloud ; who by their Anger, Revenge, Oppressions, disturb themselves and their Neighbours ; who by their expensive Entertainments and Diversions, Drinking, Gaming, &c. rob their Families and the Poor, and strengthen those very Inclinations, which Fasting is design'd to weaken and overthrow ? Can this be a Christian Fast ? Can this prevail on Heaven ? Is this the Fast, God has chosen ?

O God ! how miserably do Men deceive themselves, who go on in this Way, who observe a sort of outward Form, but know

know nothing of the true Spirit of the Church ; and at the end of their Fasting are as far from all Amendment, from all Repentance, from all Mercy and Pardon, as they were before ? They may call themselves Christians, but indeed are Pharisees, and ought to be avoided as Faithless and Disobedient Children both to God and the Church, and by their ill Example contributing to the Ruin of many, by leading them out of the Way.

For the Way of God is very different. The Fast he has chosen is to be accompanied with renouncing of our own Wills, and a Faithful Obedience to his ; with true Repentance ; sincere Endeavours of Amendment ; with Works of Mercy and Charity. On the Day of thy Fast, *Break*, says he, *all the Bonds of Iniquity, cast off all those Burthens of Sin, which keep thee down : Give thy Bread to the Hungry, and cloath the Naked.* Is there then any sort of Passion or irregular Affection, by which thou art dragg'd along, as it were in Chains ? Is there any Weight of Sin that lies heavy on thee ? On the Days of thy Fast these Chains are to be broken, this Weight is to be removed : Add to these Endeavours a charitable Relief of the Poor and Distressed ; and then

*Saturday before the
then thy Fast will be acceptable : 'Twill
be the Fast which thy Lord has chosen.*

*Saturday before the First Sunday
in Lent.*

L E S S O N.

Isaiah C. 58. V. 9. to the end.

IF thou shalt honour thy Lord, not doing thy own *Ways*, nor seeking thy own *Will*, nor speaking vain *Words*, then shalt thou delight in the Lord. Fasting is an Excellent Practice, if done well ; but because it is very inconsiderable, as St. *Gregory* says, of itself, except it be accompanied with other Virtues ; therefore it is, that in this Lesson are laid before us those Holy Exercises, proper to recommend all our Mortifications to Almighty God, and render them beneficial to our own Souls. Hear then what Conditions our Lord requires of us as often as we consecrate a Fast to him.

First, To remove all Oppression or Severity towards our Neighbour.

Secondly, To decline every thing that may be injurious to him.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, To abstain from all sort of sinful Discourse.

Fourthly, To be careful in keeping the Sabbath.

Fifthly, To renounce our own Wills, and evil Inclinations.

Sixthly, To relieve the Poor and Afflicted.

On these Terms he has promised he will have regard to our Fasts, and that they shall be attended with large Effects of his Bounty, and unspeakable Blessings.

We are now just stepping into *Lent*, and whoever desires to make it a beneficial Fast, here sees what are the Conditions. 'Tis in vain to think of being exact as to the Rules of Abstinence, or of other Austerities, except at the same time we keep a strict Watch over ourselves, so as to govern our Passions, our Will, our Tongue, &c; except we as strictly observe the Rules of *Charity*, of *Patience*, of *Humility* and *Justice*, as of Abstinence or Fasting. For can it be imagin'd, that God will have regard to the keeping our Mouths in order, as to our Eating, if we observe not a like Order in our Speaking? Can it be thought he will be moved by any Rule we follow, as to what we put into the Stomach, if we keep no Rule as to what

what comes out from thence, and from the Heart ? 'Tis he himself has said, the Things that defile a Man, are those which come from the Mouth and the Heart, and they are these that render him an Enemy to God. What will then avail all the possible Strictness, as to Fasting, if the Heart be not govern'd ; if the Passions and Affections be still in disorder ?

Believe me, the Spirit of God and his Church leads quite another Way : For where-ever that takes Possession of a Heart, it brings the *whole Man* into Subjection, not permitting Irregularities in one Part, while with a strict Discipline it keeps Order in the other ; but with an equal Care overlooks his whole Charge, and with an even Hand labours to suppress all manner of Extravagancies, where-ever they first appear. Therefore St. Paul says, That such as walk by the Spirit, will not fulfil the Lusts of the Flesh, that is, *of no kind* ; because whatever they be, 'tis certain they are still contrary to the Spirit of God, and therefore it can shew them no Favour, but must make War against them, inasmuch as this Holy Spirit ever labours to crucify the Flesh, with all its Affections and Lusts.

Whence

Whence it appears most evident, that such as are subject to any considerable Disorder, of what kind soever, and live at Peace within themselves, without daily and almost continual Repugnances, Conflicts and Attempts to master it, that such, I say, live not by the true Spirit, which cannot allow of Peace with any Enemy of God and their Souls.

If therefore we intend to observe this *Lent* with this Spirit of God, is it not plain in what manner we are to undertake it? 'Tis not to consider only how and what we are to eat; but, with a diligent Eye, to take a full Review of all the Inclinations and Habits of our Souls, and resolve to spare or shew Favour to none, that has its Rise from Self-love, or the Lusts of the Flesh. The Spirit of true Penance is not consistent with any sort of Vice, and they that admit a Truce with any, have not that Spirit in them. It being then by this Spirit we are to live this Holy Time; if we live by this Spirit, let us walk by this Spirit, and this will engage us against all manner of Evil; and while, by its Direction, we Fast in Punishment of our Offences, it will likewise oblige us to an Universal Reform.

Grant,

Grant, O my God, that by this Spirit I may now begin to walk ; for I confess I am distracted with variety of Evils : I see myself many ways going astray, and many more, tho' to me unknown, are still seen by Thee. : And is it to go on thus for ever ? Put a Stop at length, my Soul, and turn from thy evil Ways ; 'tis now the Father of Mercies calls upon thee, and offers thee a Season, wherein thou may'st obtain his Grace : Do not then thy own Will, seek not thy own Ways, speak not vain Words, but faithfully labour to destroy whatever is sinful ; then shalt thou delight in thy Lord, and he shall be an everlasting Blessing to thee.

First Sunday in Lent.

L E S S O N .

2 Cor. C. 6. V. 1. ends V. 10.

BEhold 'tis now an acceptable time, behold now is the Day of Salvation. All our Life is an acceptable Time, and since the Redemption of Man, every Day is a Day of Salvation. But the Church desires we should understand this more particularly of *Lent*, wherein

wherein she calls all her Children by general Fasting and Penance to return to God ; that as much as we have gone out of the Way by our Irregularities and Offences, we may now recover again by the Method of a penitential Life. Every Sinner, by his Offences, runs away from God, and as long as he continues in that State, lives in Darkness, and at a Distance from his Eternal Good. And, O God, how dismal a Condition is this, whereby Man, created for everlasting Happiness, is so insensible of his own true Interest, as to live an Enemy to his Lord and Redeemer, be pleased with that which delights for a Moment, and will torment for ever, and thus chuse to be out of the Way of Salvation !

'Tis this unhappy State the Church, with true Compassion, bewails in Sinners ; and cries out to them, that, if ever they think of Mercy and Pardon, now is the acceptable Time, now is the Time of Salvation ; inasmuch as the whole Church now joining in Prayer, Fasting, and Humiliation, and thus endeavouring in some Manner to take Part in the Sufferings of Christ, there's no Question but Almighty God now opens the Treasures of his Grace, and more plentifully pouring forth his Blessings, is most ready to stretch forth his Hand of Mercy, to as many as join with the

the Church in their Repentance, and sincerely call upon him, *Lord save us, or else we perish.*

But how great then must their Repentance be? How sincere and entire their Conversion? This is not to be effected without true Pains, without constant Endeavours, without a faithful Care of discharging a good Conscience in every Occasion, by labouring to destroy the body of Sin with painful Mortifications, and practising whatever Virtues our Duty and Circumstances shall require.

'Tis now an acceptable Time, says the Apostle; and in what manner are we to observe it?

First, We are to give no Offence to any, that our Profession may lye under no Scandal.

Secondly, We are to be patient in all manner of Evils, whether Afflictions, Necessities, Stripes or Prifons; mild and humble under all Provocations.

Thirdly, Be Chast, Pure and Clean of Heart.

Fourthly, Have Charity.

Fifthly, Be content under Infamy and Reproach.

Sixthly, Be accounted as Deceivers, and yet be true; rejoice under Troubles, &c.

And

And by what Means are we to obtain these Virtues ? By Labours, says the Apostle, and taking Pains, by Watching, by Fasting, by the Knowledge of our Duty, by meditating on the Word of God, by the Assistance of Heaven, by fighting courageously with the Arms of Justice, and not yielding under any Opposition.

See here what our Lives ought to be, and what's the Method of advancing ourselves to this Degree of Virtue in a Spiritual Life. 'Tis now the Church calls to the Practice of it ; there being no Question, but as many as observe this Christian *Lent*, seriously labouring at this Time, by Fasting, Watching, Reading, Praying and resolutely making Opposition against all Assaults, will gain so much on themselves, as to escape the usual Snares, and prevail on Almighty God to remember no more their past Iniquities, but according to his Promise shew Mercy to them.

And this Method will all those pursue, who being vigilant have their Eyes open to their own Spiritual Advantage ; as being sensible there's no greater Assurance of being predestinated, than carefully to lay hold of the Means and Occasions God offers them for their Salvation in the Pardon of their Sins : As on the contrary, there can be no greater Argument of Spiritual Sloth,

Sloth, than to let them pass by without making any Advantage of them. Ought we not then attentively to give Ear to the Advice of St. Paul? *I exhort you,* fays he, *not to receive the Grace of God in vain.* This Time is a Grace which God offers us for the cancelling the Hand-writing that is against us, for the satisfying our past Offences, and laying the Foundation of a new Life. If we let it go unprofitably, is it not neglecting the Favours of Heaven, and evacuating its Grace? What a Reproach must this be to a thinking Soul? And what terrible Judgments may be apprehended to follow it, while God is thus contemn'd, and his Mercies slighted? This is Obstinacy and Hardness of Heart; and who knows but the losing this Opportunity may be the Loss of all? Deliver us, O God, from this Perverseness and Hardness of Heart; and as thou now layest before us the Means of Salvation, so grant us thy effectual Grace, that we may seasonably make use of them for the conquering of Sin, and everlasting Good of our Souls. O may we never receive thy Grace in vain!

First Sunday in Lent.

G O S P E L.

Matt. C. 4. V. 1. ends V. 11.

FESUS was led by the Spirit into the Desert, to be tempted by the Devil. It seems something surprizing to find the Son of God Incarnate so many ways, and with such Violence assaulted by the Devil, as is here related in this Gospel ; but when by St. Gregory's Direction, we consider how much he suffer'd from those, who were Members of the Devil, how much from Pilate, how much from the Soldiers, how much from the Jews, we cannot wonder at Christ's being tempted by the Devil, and carried up into a Mountain ; who, by his Members, permitted himself to be Crucified. But all the Indignities he suffers, are the Effect of his Love to us, and the Encrease of our Obligation to him, being all design'd for our Good. He dies a Sacrifice upon the Cross for our Redemption, and he is tempted for our Instruction. In this we are taught, that Temptation is unavoidable in a Christian Life ; that there is no degree

gree of Virtue, even that which approaches nearest to the Life of Christ, is privileg'd against it ; and that the Means of resisting it, is not for Christians to suppose they shall not be tempted, but to learn from Christ what is the most effectual way for standing against it. Hence the wise Man gives his Advice in these Terms ; *Son, upon embracing the Service of God, stand firm in Justice and Fear, and prepare thy Soul for Temptation.* It is then a general Order, whereby God declares it his Will, that excepting Infants, who dye before the Use of Reason, none shall be saved, but by Combat, and being Victorious, like Christ, over the Devil.

It is by this way of being proved with Difficulties and Storms, Christian Souls become Resolute, Constant and Courageous. Their Actions would be less Vigorous by Rest and Calm ; and by Uniformity, Custom would soon take place of Reason. If the Soul were not awak'n'd by the necessity of resisting Temptation, it would fall, by the very weight of Nature, into the most dangerous of all Temptations, that is, of performing its Exercises of Piety, without any Interior Motion, and by meer Custom only ; so that, instead of being strengthned by Peace, it would insensibly contract a Weakness, such

such as would render it uncapable of satisfying any Duties, that had but the least Difficulties to discourage it in the Prosecution.

Besides, the Soul, through Self-love, being too forward, to think the good Dispositions, it finds in itself, to be of its own Stock, and that it can command them at Pleasure, a perfect Peace would confirm it in this dangerous Mistake, and bring it, by degrees, to be insensible of its own Weakness, and of any necessary Dependence it has on God; it would take all that for Natural, which it could do without Pain, without Contradiction and Combat. So that this Way, which God has chosen, is the most effectual Means, for keeping Christians in a due Knowledge of themselves, and of God; and for perfecting them in all Virtues, such as are necessary for bringing them to a State of everlasting Peace.

From this Order of Providence, and the Example of Christ, Sincere and Pious Christians may find Grounds for Comfort amidst Temptations, so at least, as not to be dejected, tho' there be a continued Violence in the Assault, and the greatest Horrour in the Impressions; for what can be more abominable in itself, than that which was here suggested to Christ, of Self-mur-
ther,

ther, and worshiping the Devil for Interest and Ambition ? What can be more repeated, than in the Succession of those Detestable Offers that were made him ? And if all these were consistent with his Infinite Sanctity, so as not to cast the least Suspicion of Blemish upon him ; may not Christians here satisfy themselves, that the worst of Temptations, tho' they are Trials of Virtue, can be no Prejudice to it, if, like their Head, they resist and express their Abhorrence of them ? They carry with them indeed the Evidence of the Devil's Malice ; but this being External, and they wholly Passive, there can be no more Guilt in it, than in other Sinful Offers made by wicked Men, the Devil's Members, to chaste Souls, which they renounce, and hear not, but with Dislike, and an Abhorrence of the Proposal. Here then fearful Souls ought to take Courage, and learn not to be frighted at the most Impious and Filthy Temptations. To be dejected, or immoderately disturb'd at them, may be injurious to Virtue, in bringing both Darkness upon the Soul, and Weakness on the Spirits, and rendering it less Vigorous in its best Undertakings ; but to stand its Ground, and contemn them, may afford Matter of Joy in the Experience of a tried Fidelity.

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Secondly, From this Example of Christ, may Christians learn how to dispose themselves, for making Resistance against Temptations, and what are the best Preparations for triumphing over so dangerous an Enemy as he is, who here made his Attempt upon Christ, and will not fail to do the like on his Followers. In his Example they may observe two Principal ones, *Retreat* and *Fasting*, both very proportioned for making the best Defence.

Retreat, is entring into a kind of Solitude with Christ ; and tho' this can be practised by very few, so as to separate from the World ; yet there are very few, who cannot practise it in such a manner at least, as may contribute very much to their Security. For the great Danger of most Christians arising from their unnecessary Commerce with the World, such as is design'd to gratify Appetite, Inclination and Humour, may not this be cut off ? And for all that Conversation, which is sinful, or disorderly, may not here be made great Retrenchments ? As for those Discourses, which serve only to promote what is Vain, Idle, and Extravagant, is not here place for stricter Discipline ? Much might be done here by Persons of all Ranks, and much to their Advantage.

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For

For as those Ideas, which the Devil makes use of in all Temptations, become more Lively and Vigorous, by being frequently renew'd, in what we see and hear; so they grow less active and dull in those, who cease to renew them, and, by seasonably withdrawing from unnecessary Conversation, endeavour to apply their Minds to better Objects. This is the Advantage we may make of the Narrowness of our Souls in this Life: Few things are enough to fill it, and hence, as the Application to the World banishes from it the Thoughts of God, so in applying itself to the Truths of God, the Impressions of Worldly Things are much weakened in it. And may not then all Christians, in a great degree, thus find a way to disarm the Devil, if at this time they would so far seek Retreat, as to let Reading and Prayer take place of that Conversation; by which, in an indiscreet pleasing themselves, they give great Advantages to the Devil, by quickning those Ideas, which he afterwards fails not to turn to their Ruin.

Fasting is the other Way, which, if duly perform'd, may be very helpful; for this being the Practice of a Self-denial as to Eating and Drinking, it may put Christians in the way of denying themselves,

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selves, as to all other things, which they observe hurtful, and the Occasions of Sin. This is the Self-denial, which is the First Principle of the Gospel, for separating Souls from the Love of the World, and drawing them towards God; and those, who are the Professors of it, can have no Hopes of arriving at length at Happiness, but by beginning here, and going on in this way. This is the Design of the Church, which proposing Fasting for the Punishment of Sin, intends likewise, that Christians should undertake that more general Fast, which consists in a general Mortification of all dangerous Passions, and a Separation from all that is sinful. The Outward Fast is a Figure of this, and likewise a proper Means for coming to it, that is, of Christians coming to a Command of themselves, and bringing all that is within them, into a Subjection to Reason, regulated by the Will of God: And if once they come to this, how little is it, the Devil can prevail upon them with all his Snares, and the very worst of Temptations? Thus, O God, art thou pleased to lead us through safe Ways, and we are sensible how much it is our Interest to walk in them. Teach us to be Sincere in what we undertake, that all may not pass away in a meer Formality, but that Fasting as

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we ought (and joining to this, both Recollection of Mind, and a Watchfulness over our Passions) we may come to that degree of Virtue, which, by thy Grace, will secure us against all Temptations, and conduct us to Happiness.

Monday, the First Week in Lent.

L E S S O N.

Ezek. C. 34. V. 11. ends V. 16.

I Will feed my Sheep, says our Lord, I will seek that which was lost, &c. Almighty God here promises to take care of his People; and tho' this was spoken to the Jews, yet this same Promise was more abundantly confirm'd to the Gentiles; and 'tis in his Goodness and Fatherly Care all Christians are to depend for the Remedy of their Evils. Having therefore here promis'd that he will seek that which was lost, bring back what was gone astray, heal what was wounded, strengthen what was weak, &c. ought not this to raise up the Spirits of all, so that the Sinner despair not, nor the Weak be dejected, nor the

the Wounded lose Hopes of Recovery? But how are they to expect the Effects of this Goodness? If God seeks what was lost, and by secret Touches of his Providence makes them sensible of their Errors; are they to lye still, shutting their Eyes against his Light, and wait till there are no agreeable Errors to delude them? If he binds up the Wounds of those that are hurt; are they to put no Restraint on themselves, but take the Liberty of every thing that is pleasing, and thus daily open, or rather widen their Sores anew? And if he applies means to strengthen such as are weak, is it for them to stand exposed to such Things as are most certainly prejudicial to them? Believe me, this is not the Way to experience the Effects of this Mercy. For as the Rain and Seed falling on Rocks and Highways, is no Remedy at all of their Barrenness; and only there brings forth Fruit where it finds an Earth manur'd and prepared to receive it: So 'tis most certain, tho' the Blessings of Heaven may pour themselves forth in plentiful Showers; yet where they fall on those, - who, like Rocks and Highways, are hard and dry, so as wilfully, or through neglect, to cast off all that falls on them, they will be barren still,

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and receive no Benefit from all these Blessings of a Fatherly Hand.

This is the Case of Christians. If Almighty God calls them, and they will not hear ; if he shews them their Wickedness, and they will not see ; if he directs them how to amend, and they will observe no Rules ; if he tells them what will hurt and ruin them, and they will not avoid it ; what Effects can they expect from these Favours of Heaven ? They may talk indeed of this Goodness of God, and in Form of Words pretend with Joy to praise his Mercy ; but this Goodness and Mercy is what will avail them nothing, but only to exaggerate their Crimes, since their Perverseness and Ingratitude ever grows more black and intolerable, in proportion to those Heavenly Blessings which they abuse or neglect. And, it may be, nothing will one Day be a greater Reproach, or more torment them to the quick, than the Remembrance of those many Graces, which they have thus ungratefully rejected.

Is it not then the great Concern of as many as desire to benefit themselves by the Blessings of God, then to take the greatest Pains in being regular in every Duty, when they perceive Almighty God visits

visits them with the greatest Bounty; that so his Mercy finding their Souls prepar'd, may soon appear in the Fruits of a plentiful Harvest? And is not this the Busines of all at this Time? For 'tis now a Time of Mercy, when God promises to visit his People, and manifest his Goodness to the Scatter'd, to the Lost, to the Wounded, to the Weak, to the Strong. And ought not all these, as many as are any ways concern'd, seriously to recollect themselves, and make the best Preparation they are able, that this heavenly Goodness may not be lost on them? Ought not all truly to humble themselves in Fasting? Ought not all to have Recourse to Prayer, diligent Reading, and Thinking? How ought the lost and stray'd, with all possible Freedom, to renounce their own Ways, and make an entire Surrender of themselves to those Ways, where God's Spirit and Truth shall lead them? Ought not they resolutely to withstand those Passions, which carry them beyond all the Bounds of Reason and Duty? Ought not every one to make War upon their own ill Habits, and diligently decline whatever they discover to be the Occasion of their Sin? Ought it not to be our common Busines to move Heaven by our Sighs and Tears, and by

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a sincere Repentance dispose our Souls for a general Pardon ; and where we find Difficulties, there to use Violence, and force corrupt Nature, by discreet Mortifications, to a just Compliance ?

If we heartily espoused this Cause, and thus kept a *Lent* in earnest, we might with a well grounded Confidence expect a Share in the promised Blessings ; then might we, however lost before, hope to be found again by our Heavenly Pastor. Grant therefore, Lord, that while thou seekest us, we may earnestly seek to be found by Thee : That while thy Mercy offers to heal our Wounds, and comfort whatever is weak, we may faithfully on our Parts observe thy Directions, and by no Disorder disappoint the Designs of thy Goodness.

Tuesday, the First Week in Lent.

L E S S O N .

Isaiah C. 55. V. 6. ends V. 11.

*S E E K our Lord while he may be found,
Call upon him while he is near.* This
is the Advice of the Church in this Holy
Time

Time, desiring all now to seek our Lord, and call on him, because now he may be found. But how are we to seek him? Hear the next Words of this Lesson; *Let the wicked Man forsake his Way, and the unjust Man his Thoughts, and return to his Lord, and he will have Mercy on him.* There's no seeking God, so as to find him, without forsaking Sin; and whoever seeks him otherwise, will never find him. This is the constant Lesson, so often repeated to us in *Lent*, that we may not deceive ourselves, in thinking that we seek God by our Fasting, if we quit not at the same time all those Ways of ours, which we know are evil and displeasing to him. For as those, who move one Foot forward, and the other backward, can never possibly advance, but keep still at the same Distance, as if they had never thus attempted to move at all: So 'tis most evident, that as many as think of approaching to God by Fasting, and at the same time go back from him, by continuing in their former and usual Sins, very much impose on themselves, if by this Method they think of ever coming nearer to him. This is not seeking to find him, but palliating Wickedness with the Cover of Religion; 'tis joining in a Form of Holiness, and go-

ing on where the Devil leads them ; and how will they ever come by this Way to find Christ ? They'll find him at last indeed in the Severity of his Judgments ; but what Part can they then hope to have in the Mercies here promised, of which their own Consciences will declare them unworthy, for their having so often contemn'd them when they were offer'd, and refused to call upon God when he was near ?

If Sinners were but truly sensible of the Miseries of their Condition, and how great a Blessing is the present Offer of Mercy, they would certainly receive the Encouragement of this Day's Lesson with Joy, and make use of this time, not in a ceremonial Fasting, but by entring on a new Method, in the Change of their Lives. If we could but imagine that God had for once dispensed with the irreversible Sentence of the Damn'd, and releasing them from that State, should grant them six Weeks time on Earth again, wherein they might repent and do Penance for their former Offences, with this Day's Promise, *That if the Wicked would forsake their Evil Ways, and the Unjust their Thoughts, and return to their Lord, he would have Mercy on them* ; in what manner can we think, in this Case, these joyful Souls

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Souls would employ this Time? What Earnestness would there be in seeking God while he might be found, what Fervour in calling on him while he was near? What Cries of returning Sinners! What Sighs of Repentance! What Diligence in avoiding all Occasions! What Rigours in Fasting and Mortification! How careful not to lose Time! &c. And ought not this to be the very Method of Christians now, especially of those whose Sins lie so heavy on them, that in some manner they may be said to be already judg'd? How ought they, upon the Summons of Mercy at this Time publish'd, to have Recourse to Prayer, and by laborious Endeavours strive to change all the Affections of their Souls? With what frequent Sighs and Tears should they sollicit Heaven, omitting no Sort of Self-denials or Mortifications proper for their mastering their disorder'd Passions, and never give over this Work, till they have Reason to hope their Hearts are chang'd, and now prepared for the offered Mercy: *I will pursue my Enemies (says David) and never rest till they are quite defeated.* This ought to be the Task of Lent to every Christian, so diligently to pursue the Enemies of their Souls, as to admit no Peace till they are overcome; and by no Means to let this Time

Time pass over in fruitless Forms and Ceremonies, and thus ungratefully abuse that Goodness which now calls them to Repentance; it being no less a Mercy to grant them now this Time and Means, whereby they may be preserved from Hell, than if once condemn'd, to rescue them from that Misery, and indulge them new Time to reverse their Fate.

Let us then look on these Six Weeks as an Indulgence of the Divine Mercy, granted us for the making Atonement for all our past Offences, and preparing our Souls to appear before him; and who knows whether the whole Six Weeks will come to our Share or no? Let us seriously carry on this Penitential Work, be neither wanting in Prayers nor Tears, nor any ways favour our Sins, by sparing ourselves; for all such Favours will at the end prove Cruelties. 'Tis our Sins have placed us at a distance from God; 'tis only our Repentance can again bring us near him.

Wednesday,

Wednesday, Ember-Week in Lent.

L E S S O N.

Exodus, C. 24. V. 12. to the End.

AND Moses was in the Mount forty Days and forty Nights. God had commanded him to go up into the Mount, there to receive from his Hand the Tables of Stone, the Law and the Commandments; there the Majesty of God appear'd as a consuming Fire, and *Moses* abode in his Presence forty Days and forty Nights. Happy *Moses*, who fasted forty Days and forty Nights in the Presence of God. Happy we, who have begun our forty Days Fast, could we abide this Time, and finish them all in the Presence of God; could we live this Time so exactly regulated by the Spirit of Piety, as if, like this Prophet, we were daily receiving the Commandments, and the Charge of keeping them from God's own Hand. The Fast of this Prophet was certainly the Figure and true Model of the Christian Fast; and therefore, however exact or even rigorous we may be as to our Abstinence, we shall make but a very imperfect Work of it, if we have not the Commandments and

and Laws of God in our Hands, that is, in our Works, and just Discharge of our Duty.

How grateful a Fast therefore would those observe, who making a holy Mount of their House, would endeavour now to ascend into it; leaving, like *Moses*, the Multitude below, by disengaging themselves, as much as possible, from all that Business and Diversion which takes up the Multitude, and is only fit to dissipate the Mind? For tho' the necessary Care of a Family, and just Diligence in faithfully performing every thing belonging to our Charge, is a Duty becoming all Times; yet when the Church calls us to Recollection and Penance, 'tis then fit to make the best Retreat we can from such Things as give Disquiet to our Thoughts, and alienate our Minds from God. And how many are there of this kind, whether in regard to Business, Visits, Company, Diversions, &c. which, without Prejudice, will bear the being adjourn'd a while? For tho', in Favour to ourselves, we may look on many Things as necessary; yet considering them more impartially, we shall discover the greatest Part might be spar'd, were it not for Flattery and Self-love, which corrupts our Judgment: It being not so much real Business which disturbs the

the greatest Part of the World, and indisposes them for better Thoughts, as their Extravagancies, Irregularities, Curiosities, and immoderate complying with Company, or their own corrupt Appetites.

All these unnecessary Engagements then being carefully laid aside, it may be in the Power of every one to retire, in *Lent*, into a kind of Solitude, there to converse more familiarly with God in Prayer, and treat of the only great Concern of their Souls; which ought to be their daily and principal Employment in this holy Time. And besides this, no Diligence ought to be omitted for their receiving the Commandments from the Hand of God. The greatest Part of Christians know their Commandments; but they know better to say them, than to keep them: And what is this, but to learn them from their Books, but not from God? For what he teaches, is to keep them. This then ought to be a considerable Part of their Busines, to learn their Commandments of God; that is, so constantly to beg his Assistance, as to obtain his Grace for the exact Observance of them: To apply themselves so carefully to the reading good Books, that having first discover'd their own Failings, they may in them find Remedies proper for their Cure, and be encourag'd
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to keep such a Watch on themselves, that from their strict and constant Guard, they may be truly said to be the Keepers of the Commandments.

'Tis a common Snare, wherein too many are held, to go on in dangerous Ways, to have Souls wholly worldly and carnal, and know nothing of the Gospel, Spirit, or of Christ; and yet be so blind, as to see nothing of their State, nor doubt of their being in a wrong Way. And the Reason is, because seldom conversing with good Books, they are not sensible of the Nature of Sin; have very gross and only general Conceptions of it; but are not at all acquainted with those infinite Delusions, by which the Devil and Self-love, under fair and innocent Covers, carries on Souls to Precipices, and by degrees to the Depth of Vice. Is it not thus we see many, tho' free from the grosser Crimes, and therefore innocent in their own Opinion, yet without Scruple offending against Charity, against Justice, against Temperance, &c. so as to make others justly wonder, and even be scandaliz'd at their Proceedings, and repute them very unsafe in their State, whilst they enjoy a certain Peace within themselves, as if all were well? And what's the Reason of this Insensibility, but their little Care in reading those

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those Books which are proper to give them Light in this Affair, and make them more knowing in the Concern of Conscience and the Spirit? Upon which Score, tho' many may hope their Sins of Ignorance will not be charg'd against them, they'll find them at the End very heavy; and what they call *Ignorance*, will be condemn'd as a *gross Neglect of their Souls, and a very criminal Omission*. Another Way therefore is now to be taken in *Lent*, and these ill Consequences of a stupid Negligence to be prevented by diligent Reading and Prayer; that thus using due Means for their Instruction, their Oversight may find *Excuse*, and they hope to receive the Commandments from God, and plentiful Grace, whereby to keep them: This will be truly ascending into the Mount, and conversing with God, the best Exercise of *Lent*.

Thursday, First Week in Lent.

L E S S O N.

Ezekiel, C. 18. V. 1. ends V. 9.

I*f a Man be just, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live. Here's a Promise of eternal Life to him that is just.*

just. The Terms of Happiness are here included in a little room ; He that is just, shall be happy : But this short Expression comprehends many great Duties. 'Tis not only being just to our Neighbour, in giving him his own, or not wronging him as to his Goods ; but to be just to him as to his Reputation ; to be just in giving him good Example, and doing nothing that may be prejudicial either to Soul or Body : 'Tis to be just more particularly to those under our Charge, as a Master to his Family and Servants, Parents to their Children, that nothing be wanting to them, through their Fault, either of Spirituals or Temporals ; as likewise that Servants and all others faithfully discharge whatever belongs to their Obligation, so that none suffer through their Sloth or Neglect. Besides this Justice to our Neighbour, there's a Necessity of being just to God ; that is, of giving to God the Things that are God's ; in loving him above all Things, and preferring no Creature or created Good before him, which is giving him our Hearts and Affections ; in believing those Truths which he teaches, and opposing nothing that comes from him ; and this is giving him our Understanding and Judgment : In referring all we undertake, speak or do, to his Honour and Glory ; and

and this is giving him our Life and Actions ; and what is this but giving all to him, to whom all belongs ? Again, there's another Justice we owe ourselves ; and this is to omit nothing necessary for the Support of Body or Soul, but carefully to provide for their Well-being ; this is a Charge Almighty God has laid on all ; and to neglect it, is an evident Breach of Justice. How many Obligations here follow upon this, as to the taking all the Pains necessary for the Knowledge of our Duties ; as likewise in using all the Means ordain'd by God, for the enabling us to do those Duties : Then for the diligent Enquiry into all our Failings, and omitting no Care, whether in Praying, Reading, Fasting, Alms, or other Application, that may be proper and most effectual for their Cure ? Many other great Obligations fall upon us from this Head, which the just Man faithfully performs. And whoever now complies with these threefold Duties of Justice, both to God, their Neighbour, and themselves, that Man is truly just, and there's no Question, but thus, *If a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live.*

But then let those many here consider how much they deceive themselves, who seem secure of Happiness on the false Grounds

Grounds of a mistaken, or at least imperfect Justice. *We do wrong to none*, say they, *We give to every one their own*; and upon this Assurance presently flatter themselves with the Character of *Just*: Whereas this is but one Part of *Justice*; and such as comply with this, may yet many other Ways offend against this Virtue, and be guilty of great Injustice against God, their Neighbour, and themselves; and tho' they are neither Thieves, Oppressors, or Cheats, be still deservedly excluded Heaven. What if they rob not on the Highway, do Violence to none, but punctually pay to every one their due; may not they still be Thieves in Shops and Trade, and be very unjust to those they deal with? May not they be unjust to their Family, to Wife, to Children, and the Poor, in viciously or vainly spending what's for their Support? May not they be unjust to God, in alienating from him their Understanding, Affections, Heart, and Will, and giving to Creatures what's his Right? May not they be unjust to themselves, in many great Omissions, by which they murther their own Souls? There's more in being just than these imagine; and when they think they are so, is it not to be fear'd, 'tis for Want of examining themselves, and knowing what true

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Justice is? And if upon these false Grounds they build their Hopes of Heaven, how far will that be from them, when they think they are near it? And this will be a late Discovery, if they take no Care in Health to find it out, but stay till Death opens their Eyes, and sad Experience puts it beyond all doubt.

Another Deceit there is in those, who, touch'd with the Desire of being just, resolve to change their Lives, and proceed so far, as even to censure and correct whatever they find most criminal in themselves: Thus upon the Heat their most scandalous and grosser Sins they carefully avoid; but as for their Heart, that remains still the same; their Passions are unmortified; they are fond of the World and its Vanities; and know not how to renounce themselves, to take up the Cross, and become a true Disciple of their Lord: They understand not what it is to be born of the Spirit, to be interiourly chang'd, to make War against all corrupt, worldly and dangerous Desires, Inclinations and Satisfactions; but forsaking the more notorious Crimes, look on all beyond this to be pious Affectation, or at least the Practice of an unnecessary Devotion: And being arrived thus far, they conclude themselves *Just,* when

94 *Thursday, First Week in Lent.*

when God knows they are not come half Way : And what will this avail them, when, notwithstanding their Retrenchments, having their Hearts wholly deprav'd and worldly, they live not according to the Maxims of the Gospel and Christ's Spirits, but are led along, tho' not in the Depth of Sin, yet in the corrupt Ways of the Flesh and the World ? And shall these live with Christ for ever, who are not acquainted here with the Life of Christ ? Can they hope for the Reward of Justice, who never pass'd the Shell, and came not half Way to it ? What then ought we to do at present, but in this Time of Devotion, to examine the State of our Souls, and see what we want of *true Justice*, and never rest, till by Prayer and Fasting we have cast out all manner of evil Spirits from our Hearts, so to make Room for the Spirit of Justice ? For thus only can we inherit the Promises.

Friday,

Friday, Ember-Week in Lent.

L E S S O N.

Ezekiel, C. 18. V. 20. ends V. 28.

IF the wicked Man does Penance for all the Sins he has committed, and keeps my Precepts, and does that which is lawful and just, he shall surely live, and not die. This whole Lesson is an Engagement of God's Word to Sinners; that if they forsake, and do Penance for their Sins, they shall have Forgiveness, and their Iniquities shall no more be remember'd; with a Caution to the Just, that if they turn from their Righteousness, all their good Works shall be forgotten, and they certainly die the Death of the Wicked. Thus are we here spur'd on to a Holy Life, and encourag'd to Repentance, if we are under the Guilt of Sin: And in this again appears, by so frequent a Proposal of these Truths, what the Church expects should be our Employment this *Lent*; to wit, to be exactly diligent in such Exercises as are proper to establish us in a Life of Virtue, and purify our Souls from Sin; and 'tis with this latter we must first begin.

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Our first Business then is to apply ourselves to such Means as may be most effectual for the Remedy of Sin; for 'tis only on this Condition, we can render ourselves capable of God's Mercy and Favour. Ought not every one then, seriously reflecting on the Misery in which he is, how by his Offences he's become displeasing to God, and removed at a Distance from him, and from all Good, forthwith to conceive a true Abhorrence of his State, and, push'd on with a sincere Desire of Amendment, cry out with the Prodigal Son, *I will arise, and go to my Father?* He must first *arise*, that is, quit that State of Misery and Corruption in which he lies; he must, by Violence, separate himself from all the Occasions of his Sins, and admit no Society with Darkness, while he's resolying to go to the Region of Light. God will have him be converted from his evil Ways; for if he goes on still in the Path of his Iniquity, if he repeats his former Sins, what Claim can he reasonably lay to the Promises of Mercy? Can there be Mercy for such as will do nothing for it? For such as will part with no Satisfaction for God's sake? No, all these, who thus carelessly or affectedly continue in their wonted Transgressions, however they may have passing Thoughts

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Thoughts of approaching to God, most certainly continue at a distance from him ; and God grant their Punishment one Day be not what they now chuse, that is, to be separated from him for ever. He must arise then that thinks effectually of Mercy, and *go to his Father.*

For however a Sinner may arise from his usual Crimes, he must yet remember, he may still have a Journey upon his Hands, a great Way to go, before he comes to his Father. It is not every one that breaks off the Course of his Sins, is presently in Union with God. There may be many Degrees in a true Conversion ; and there is no question, but he that disposes all Things, may, by a providential Mercy, permit many Delays in the perfect Cure of a Soul. How often is it that Almighty God lets Christians continue a long Time struggling with their Infirmities, and almost in a perpetual Conflict with their perverse and stubborn Passions ; so that, tho' they fall not into their accustomed Sins, yet they frequently experience their own Weakness, under the Violence of their Inclinations, not yet willing to yield ? And this, that they may be sensible of the Greatness of their Evils ; that, by the Difficulty, they may know how to value their Cure ; that they may

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be more watchful in preventing all Relapses, that, by their continued Prayer and repeated Endeavours, their Souls may be enlarged, and become more capable of the divine Gifts ; that hence they may be preserved in a perpetual Humility and lasting Thanksgiving. These Advantages there may be in these Delays, and in the Length of the Journey before the Sinner comes to God : And tho' this may be afflicting to a Soul that truly desires to experience the Sweetness of divine Love ; yet he that has too much sought his own Satisfaction, and transgres'd the Commandments, to please himself, ought in Justice to expect some Difficulties in his Cure, and endeavour, by his Patience in this laborious Way, to make some Satisfaction for the sinful Charms of that long Way, wherein he ran from God.

'Tis but reason they should find something of that Method Christ used in healing the Man sick of the Palsey, *Matt. ix. 6.* He bad him take up his Bed and go to his House. While he was sick he lay on his Bed, and there took his Rest ; but now he must take it up and carry it. Such as are under a Spiritual Palsey make their Passions serve them as a kind of Bed, wherein their Souls rest and seek their Ease : But when a Soul is converted, these same

same Passions become a Burthen, and it must with Patience go under them, as under a heavy Weight ; even as the Paralytick found his Bed now to be no Comfort, but a Charge or Oppression to him. For God is just, and he will that those who have tasted the Pleasure of their Passions, should now feel their Weight, and meet with Difficulties in their Cure. But a Soul must here go on with Courage, and accept this Trouble, as a just Penance for past Offences. 'Tis in this a Sinner shews the Sincerity of his Conversion, while he lets not the Difficulty of his Amendment put him out of his Way. They know not what Virtue is, nor consider the true Value of their Souls, who think to go on with this Work at Ease, and are presently discouraged upon meeting with Difficulties. This is a Victory not to be obtained by one Battle, but by repeated Engagements ; and he that expects to be Conqueror, must take as much Pains to gain Ground, as the Devil does not to lose it ; for he that is soonest tired, will certainly be the Loser. These are the Battles proper for this Time ; 'tis now every Christian ought to proceed with Courage, with Constancy and Patience ; there are none so lost, but by these Means may rescue themselves from the Power

of the Enemy. Let us then do Penance for all the Sins we have committed, and cast ourselves wholly on the infinite Mercies of God, and we shall surely live, and not die.

Saturday, Ember-Week in Lent.

L E S S O N .

Deut. C. 26. V. 12. to the End.

I Have taken that which was sanctified out of my House, and given it to the Levite, to the Stranger, to the Orphan, and to the Widow, as thou, O Lord, hast commanded me : I have not transgress'd thy Precepts, nor forgotten thy Commands. Almighty God had enjoin'd the Israelites to give their Tents to the Levites ; and, at appointed Times, to make a Division of all they had, and give one Part of it to Strangers, Orphans, and Widows ; all this was esteemed sanctify'd : And, having discharged themselves of this Duty, they were then obliged to pray in the manner as here prescribed in this Lesson ; and were thus qualified for inheriting the Promises God had made them. And would



would to God every Christian would come thus disposed to perform the Devotions of this Time, having nothing in their Possession, which, by Title of Justice, and Law of God, belongs to others ; that with Truth they might say, they have nothing in their House which is the Right of the *Levite*, of the Stranger, of the Orphan, or Widow ; but that they have faithfully given to every one their own. Such Prayers, thus offered from Hands not empty, but full of good Works, may with Confidence expect a plentiful Blessing from Heaven, which is ever liberal of its Succours to those whose Hands are directed by Justice, and whose Hearts are ever open to the Necessities of the Poor.

But as for those who undertake the Obligations of this Time in Fasting and Praying, and can make no such Protestation, without a Breach of Truth, by unjustly detaining in their Hands what belongs to others ; these can have no such Hopes, while the Cries of the Fatherless and Widow, who suffer by their Injustice, ascend before God, and shew all their Devotion to be Lies and Hypocrify. For what better Character can these claim, who too often make the Oppression of the Poor the Support of their Extravagancies ? They

find Money for their Vanities and Excess, for their Drinking and Gaming, and even for their Vices : But when the Payment of just Debts is demanded, there is nothing to be had but cold Put-offs, or faithless Promises ; so that pretending to want wherewith to satisfy Justice, they ever find wherewith to feed their vicious Humours : To supply these, they try all Friends, diminish their Estates, and often mortgage so long, till the whole be consumed ; and then only think of being good Husbands when just Payments are to be made. Now what Effect can this Sort of Half-Christians expect in their Fasting and Praying, who cannot lift up their Hands to Heaven, but under the Load of Injustice ; who, by a genteel sort of Fraud and Rapine, make Families starve, and depriving Parents of what is necessary ; with Poverty bring lasting Contentions amongst them, and render them incapable of performing their Duties, which is often attended with dismal Consequences, even to many Generations ? Can these think their Prayers will not be drowned with the Cries of the Oppressed ? God has promised to hear the Poor, the Orphan, and Widow ; and if he hears their Cries, will not these be fatal to those by whose Injustice they suffer ? It were then

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to be wish'd, all Christians would at this Time examine themselves by the Justice of the *Jew*, and not lie still in a false Peace, under the Weight of these great Sins; nor rest till they have taken effectual Care for the removing the Burthen. Happy they, who can say with Truth, *Feci Iudicium & Justitiam: I have done Justice and Judgment.* Who can say, *They have cast out of their House what belongs to the Levite, to the Orphan and Widow.* This would be a good Disposition to the keeping of *Lent*.

Another is, to be affording to the Poor in their Necessities, by giving Alms. This is so necessary, that the Holy Fathers will not allow *Lent* to be kept but by Halves, where Fasting goes without Alms. This is universally concluded by all, and ought as universally to be observed, where 'tis possible, by as many as desire the Fruit of their Fasting, in the Pardon of their Sins. Hence we are to have a double Care.

First, To give to the Poor what we can truly spare; for this, in some manner, is their Right: Because what is superfluous to the Rich, is necessary for the Poor. And *He that keeps such Things by him*, St. Augustine says, *keeps what is not his own.* This sort of giving is, in reality,

giving to Christ ; 'tis dividing our Substance with him ; 'tis taking him into Part of our Inheritance, and the most assured Means of being chosen Coheir with him of Glory.

Secondly, Not to spend any thing in this Time of Penance, except on what is necessary ; that is, not to cast Money away upon Curiosity, upon Diversions, Entertainments, Vanity, much less sacrifice it to Sensuality or Vice : But lay all this by, which Nature prompts us thus to misemploy, and let it be the Stock of the Poor. What a full Treasury would here soon be, if all, thus to be mispent, were brought in here ? And tho' it may be natural here to reflect on those great Ones, who spend their Estates in Vanity and Excess ; yet, if we look'd nearer Home, I believe there is scarce any but who might easily find one indebted to this Stock ; whilst, of the many Things we all pretend to be *necessary*, an impartial Judge, I fear, would account the greatest Part to *Self-love*, to *Humour*, ill *Custom*, and *Superfluity*. Let us now then resolve on a better Management, and never throw away that, which, if rightly placed, would serve to purchase Heaven. *Whilst thou spendest any thing idly, the Poor lay Claim to it, and say 'tis theirs :* They cry aloud,

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'Tis all inhumanly taken from them, whatever is thus mispent. Thus St. Bernard. But if thou dividest thy Stock with them, thou thus payest thy long-contracted Debts; thou makest Recompence for thy past Excesses, and Provision for thy Soul, by laying up a Treasure in Heaven. Let us then pay this double Debt, retaining nothing which is another's Right, keeping nor spending nothing of which Providence has made us only Stewards, to distribute to the Necessitous, but not to feed our own Extravagancies. Thus, if we give to the Stranger, to the Fatherless, the Widow, and the Poor, what is their Portion, this Justice and Charity will render both our Fasting and Prayer acceptable, and most certainly discharge us of those Debts we owe to God, in the entire Pardon of all our Sins.

Second Sunday in Lent.

LESSON.

I *Theff.* C. 4. V. 1. ends V. 7.

THIS is the Will of God, that you be Holy. Having now pass'd over a Week of Lent, it may not be improper

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for Christians, on this Day, to take a short Review of themselves, and see how far they have complied with the Obligation of this Time; how far they have gained on themselves, and in their Approaches to that great End, designed in this holy Institution. For certainly, as *this is the Will of God, that you be Holy*; so this is the Intention of the Church in all the Injunctions of this Time, *that you be Holy*. This End it is the Church proposes; having no other Reason to require of her Children to Fast, Pray, give Alms, and mortify themselves in all manner of Self-denials, than as far as these are Means most effectual for obtaining God's Mercy, and that true Holiness of Life, which is the necessary Accomplishment of every good Christian.

Let all then here call the Week over, and enquire first with what Exactness, according to the best of their Abilities, they have observed the Means enjoined of Fasting, Mortification, &c. and then take one Step farther, and see how much they have benefited by the Use of these Means, in *being Holy*, as is the Will of God and his Church. For if, upon Examination, they find their principal Concern has been to be only regular in Fasting, and not to be more Holy than ordinary, what is the

Advantage

Advantage of *Lent*? If they go on still in all their wonted Excesses of their Tongue, of their Appetite, corrupt Affections and Sense; are just as wordly, carnal, and extravagant, as before; how do these comply with the Will of God, which is, that they be *Holy*? Have not these Reason to correct this Error in the Humility of a sincere Repentance; and, tho' late, yet now truly resolve on a new Method, so as not to lose the Benefit of the Time to come? It ought to be their present Business to look into their Defects, and consider what in particular is absolutely necessary, on their Parts, for their Amendment. It ought to be their great Care, this Day, to study what it is *to be Holy*, and what is required of them for fulfilling this Will of God.

And, upon a short Reflection, it will appear, that, *to be Holy*, is to comply with that First and Greatest Command, which is, *To love God above all Things*: And what is this, but to give to God the first Place in our Hearts; to let him have the Rule of our Thoughts, our Words, and all our Actions? So that as worldly Men are led along by the Violence of their depraved Appetites, the Will of God may powerfully over-rule in us all these Inclinations, and we labour not to fulfill our own

own Desires, but truly to satisfy that Obligation which our heavenly Father lays on us.

Now, to possess ourselves of this divine Love, which is the Root of all Holiness, 'tis not enough to conceive certain Idea's or Thoughts of it: For its Seat not being in the Understanding, we may come to apprehend, discourse, and treat of this Love of God, and yet be totally void of it: As many great Men, alas! there are, who reason and discourse most profoundly of God, and divine Things, and yet are but little or nothing inflamed with them. Nay, to go farther, and protest, with Tongue and Mind, that we love God, and prefer him to all Creatures, is not yet true Love, but only Signs of it: And would to God there were not too many Christians, who, repeating over their Prayers thus, in Words attest their Love to him; and yet at the same time have their Hearts possess'd with many Passions of Sensuality and Corruption, and not at all moved, but in Appearance, by that Love which they pretend to: Which is not an Act of the Understanding, but a certain Impulse and Inclination of the Will towards its principal Object, which is God.

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'Tis here then we are chiefly to examine ourselves, not only whether we speak or think frequently of God; but besides this, whether we have an Inclination or Bent in our Hearts, whereby, as with a secret and sweet Violence, we are ready to serve, obey, and please him in all we can; whether we make his Interest our own; rejoice in what's joyful to him; grieve at all that displeases him; and fear nothing more, than what may endanger our Separation from him. In such a Disposition of the Heart, and not in Words, or barren Thoughts, consists this Love, the Ground of our Perfection. And if, upon Enquiry, we can discover such a Power within us, which makes us fight resolutely against Temptations, decline whatever we apprehend to be the Occasion of Sin, which makes us prefer our Duty before pleasing ourselves or Company, apply ourselves diligently to such Means as are proper to weaken our ill Habits, and improve in spiritual Strength, which makes us disesteem the World and all human Respects, rejoice in the Expectation of Bliss, and be in a Disposition of leaving Father, Mother, Friends, Estate, and good Name, rather than depart from the Law of God: If we can discover, I say, such a Power moving within us, we
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have then Reason to hope, that God has kindled in our Hearts some Sparks of that divine Fire he came to bring on Earth. But if we find no such Signs, we are then bound to use all Endeavours for the changing of our Hearts, and never be tired till we see some good Fruits begin to appear: For till the Sense of our Duty, and the Love of God, gets the Victory over, and commands all that is worldly and sensual within us, we deceive ourselves, if we think we are Holy, as is the Will of God we should be.

Second Sunday in Lent.

G O S P E L.

Matt. C. 17. V. 1. ends V. 9.

HE was transfigured before them. The Subject of this Gospel is the glorious Transfiguration of our Lord, on Mount Thabor, in Presence of his three Apostles, Peter, James, and John; where, by the Testimony of Heaven, he was acknowledged to be the Son of God; a Command was given them to hear him, *Ipsum Audite*; and, by a passing Glimpse of Glory,

Glory, they had a Taste of that Happiness, which is reserved in the next Life, for the Recompence of the Just.

The Design of this Mystery was, not only to confirm the Faith of the Apostles ; but likewise to strengthen them against all the Evils of this Life, by the Hopes of that Glory, which being seen here only in part, made them forget all below, and with Earnestness desire to be established in it. And the same, I believe, is one principal Motive why the Church, in this Time of Mourning, presents us with this glorious Mystery, that, by the Hopes of one Day coming to the Possession of that Happiness, which was so surprizing in the Shadow, we may with Resolution go on through all those difficult Ways which lead to it ; and not let the Trouble of present Mortification make us give up the Cause, and be the Disappointment of all our Hopes.

Whatever therefore our Desires be, of being delivered from the Uneasiness of this Life, and being settled in an unchangeable Peace with God ; we are to remember, that this can be the only Object of our Wishes, and that at present we have another Task upon our Hands, that is, to hold on under all the Difficulties of a tiresome Conflict, and to wait till God shall

shall call us to the Rest we desire. This Instruction is given us in St. Peter, who, amidst the pleasing Objects on this Mount, crying out, *Lord, it is good for us to be here; let us make here three Tabernacles;* the Evangelist St. Luke makes this Remark upon him, that he knew not what he said, *Nesciens quid diceret;* and that, amidst this Glory, Christ discovers to him, and his Companions, all the Torments of his Passion, he was yet to suffer at *Jerusalem.* In this, informing them and us, that, tho' Happiness is to be desired, it is not to be expected, as the Portion of this Life; but that here we are to prepare ourselves for suffering, and not for the Enjoyments of a settled Rest.

If then, by Faith, God gives to his Servants such a Sense of future Happiness, as to make it desirable; and if, by the Uncertainties, Troubles, and Dangers of this Life, he encreases the Desires of that happy State, so that, with Peter, they can in Earnest say, *Bonum est nos hic esse,* '*Tis good for us to be there;*' yet this is to be done with that true Submission, as to be contented to go through all those difficult Ways that lead to it; and even in the midst of their greatest Difficulties to say, '*Tis good for us to be here:*' Because, tho' it

is

is not to be expected, that the Afflictions and dangerous Temptations of this Banishment should be welcome, in themselves, to Souls that have a true Sense of God, and a Desire of being unchangeably united to him ; yet, when they consider it the Ordinance of God ; that, by these Trials and Tribulations, they must enter into the Kingdom of Heaven ; that, by Weeping, Mourning, Conflicts, Darkness, Storms, Oppressions, and Mortifications, they must be prepared for Eternal Rest ; on this Consideration, they may know how to welcome all these, and say, '*Tis good for us to be here :*' Tis good, because 'tis the Will of God ; 'tis good, because the Fruit of this Patience is the Possession of God.

With this Submission then ought to be temper'd all the Desires of Heaven ; and, because no Christian can have a Foresight of what Portion God has ordained for them, therefore are they to offer themselves, with all the Indifferency they can, to all ; and then more especially, when the Perplexities of this Life are the Temptation for desiring a better ; since it may often happen, when they are most earnest in wishing for Rest, the Order of Heaven may have many Labours yet appointed for them, before that Rest is to come.

This

This was the Case of *Elias* the Prophet, who, deeply resenting the Sins of an Idolatrous People, tired with the Difficulties of his Post, and terrified with the Threats of *Jezebel*, fled into a Desart ; and, sitting under a Tree with this Weight on his Spirits, cried out thus to God, *Lord it is enough, take my Soul from me.* When, behold, an Angel comes with this Message, *Arise and eat, for thou hast yet a great Way to go.* He was weary of Living, and desired an End ; when, in the Order of God, a great Part of his Journey was yet to come ; and, upon Information, he submitted to it. This was likewise the Case of *Moses* with his rebellious People, and afterwards of St. *Paul*, and many other Servants of God ; set down upon Record for the Instruction of Christians, to teach them how to moderate their Desires of Heaven, and then to surrender themselves with Submission to the divine Appointments, when the Trouble of the World, or of their own restless Corruption, which will not be wholly subdued, makes Life uneasy to them.

This is to be the Rule for all anxious, afflicted, and dejected Souls ; for the Desires of Heaven are not, in themselves, to be reproved, but encouraged ; yet, because

cause none know the Battles which they are ordained to fight, and a present Uneasiness may be often the Occasion of such Desires; therefore are they to suspect themselves, if such Wishes are figh'd out without any Condition, and fear that 'tis not the Love of God, but Impatience, that raises them: And hence are they bound to correct such Prayers, by laying themselves prostrate before God, and with Sincerity to pray again, that not theirs, but his Will may be done in them.

If Nature be unwilling, it must be spurred on by the Faith of those Eternal Goods that are to come; Heaven must be laid before it, with the Conditions of the Purchase: By these it must be encouraged to pursue its Course; by these is to be sweetned all present Uneasiness. And in this manner must the Christian, tho' comfortless and tired, still offer himself to new Trials.

And this ought to be the Method of all in this holy Time: The Exercises of it cannot be welcome to our Corruption, which, ever bending to what pleases, cannot bear the Denial of it, but with Dislike; and this Dislike is so strengthened by a Custom of favouring it, that those (and who are not those?) that generally walk

walk by Inclination, ever finding Motives to make it reasonable, cannot now think, when they are called to it, of contradicting it, but with such Difficulty, as is not easily to be overcome. Hence it is, there is such a general Remissness in Fasting ; great Numbers sollicite for Dispensations ; and the true Reasons, whatever be pretended, in too many, are nothing but a long Habit of affected Niceness, and the daily Study of gratifying a disorder'd Appetite : And as for those that undertake to Fast, 'tis with such Contrivance, as to exclude all Self-denial, and even then to practise Gluttony, when they set up for Mortification. Hence it is, that Intemperance, and Prodigality and Vanity, with all the Liberties of a distemper'd World, are as much carried on in *Lent*, as at other Times ; and, when it ought to be the Business to make Atonement for past Offences, new Sins are still added to the old, and the Debt daily encreased.

And what is the Reason, but the Difficulty of Fasting, of Self-denial, of Recollection, of breaking off ill Habits, of standing against Inclination, and the common Corruption of the World ? And why does this Difficulty prevail, but because the Sense of what is present is more powerful

powerful than the Promises of Faith ? And is not this a great Fault, and even the Reproach of Christians, that believing an Eternal Life to come, and that the Possession of it depends on their Fidelity in these Exercises, they yet are so careless in them, and this only to flatter a poor Carcase, that must soon be turned into Rottenness and Dust ? And where is the Fault, but because their whole Industry is confined to this World, and they give not themselves Leisure to think of that to come, much less to consider seriously how much Eternal Happiness outweighs all the Satisfaction of the present Life ? Hence all the Idea's of Eternity being weak, 'tis no wonder they make no stronger Impressions in them ; and that as often as Earth interferes with Heaven, this so easily gives way. Here is our Misery, O God, and in thee only is our Remedy ; encrease therefore, we beseech thee, our Faith, and so strengthen in us the Impressions of the Eternal Goods, that for them we may contemn all that is Earthly, and chearfully embrace those Methods, which thou hast declared most Effectual for coming to the Possession of them : Grant we may now offer all for Heaven ; that we may esteem nothing of that hard, which thou hast appointed to be the Purchase

chase of it ; and that we may not lose the present Opportunity, wherein we are called to the Practice of what we believe.

Monday, Second Week in Lent.

L E S S O N.

Dan. C. 9. V. 15. ends V. 19.

WE have sinned, we have transgressed all thy Commandments : But let thy Anger, I beseech thee, O Lord, be turned away from us. The whole Lesson is a Prayer of *Daniel*, which he offers to Almighty God, having prepared himself by Fasting, and being now cover'd with Sack-cloth and Ashes : And 'tis in Behalf of the *Jews*, who had been in Captivity near seventy Years. What a Confusion is this to Christians who come to Prayers ; but with a Spirit how unlike to *Daniel* ! He pours forth his Soul before God, confessing his own Sins, and those of his People ; not in a Form of Words, run over with an insensible and distractèd Mind, but in the true Spirit of Penance ; rigorously punishing those Sins which he confesses, and having his Soul no less humble in the

Acknow-

Acknowledgment of his own Unworthiness, than he is abject and contemptible in the manner of his Address. We confess our Sins too; but is it with the Spirit of this holy Man? Is it with that true Sense of an offended God? With that profound Humility? With that sincere Repentance? If we examine our frequent and easy Relapses, and reflect on the little Care generally taken for not returning to the Vomit, we might have but too much Reason to fear, the Confession of the greatest Number of Christians is little better than a Form, wherein they accuse themselves, and say, *They are sorry*; but God knows how far they are from being really so. 'Tis easy repeating such Words, and not much more difficult to conceive an Idea of true Sorrow in their Understanding; but sincerely to detest their Sins, and have their Hearts so truly changed, that what was before their Choice, is now become the real Object of their Hate, and what they firmly purpose for ever to avoid: This is a greater Work, a Work of Grace, and, I fear, not so easily obtained as most presume, who think to have it, but seldom think to ask for it as they ought. They call to mind their Sins, and forthwith run to discharge their Burthen, as if Examining and

and *Confessing* were the effectual Remedy of all their Evils ; when, God knows, the principal and healing Part is yet behind, but little thought on, if not neglected. If *Daniel* had thus in haste presented a Catalogue of his own and People's Sins, could he, for this Ceremonial Form, have justly expected a Grant of that Mercy he came to ask ? No ; he knew him to be a God that regards the Heart, and not the Lips alone ; and therefore his first Care was, by true Pentential Acts, to dispose his Soul by a profound Humility, a hearty Sorrow, sincere Repentance, and well-grounded Confidence in his God : And being thus interiorly prepared, then he lays open all his Sins ; then, with all the Vigour of his Soul, he sues for Mercy, and then he finds it. O that we came thus truly qualified, as often as we confess and ask for Pardon ; never to set a Value, or think on the declaring of our Sins, till thus, like *Daniel*, we have first endeavoured to work a Change within. O ! how powerfully does an humble and contrite Heart prevail with God to lay aside his Wrath, and turn his Anger from us ? And how short will they come of Mercy, who carelessly neglect these Means ?

Again,

Again, there is another Circumstance to be observed: *Daniel* asks Pardon for his People after they had suffered near sev-enty Years Captivity for their Sins; and, while he asks it, still adds new Punishments by Fasts and Sackcloth. He knew the Order of God's Justice in regard of Man, that he either must not sin, or, if he sins, that he must be punished. 'Twas by Order of this Justice he knew his People had suffer'd so long a *Slavery*; and this same Justice he had in View whilst he used these Rigours on himself. And is not this to teach us how readily we ought to submit to those Afflictions which God sends us, as the just Scourge of our Offences; and likewise, by voluntary Mortifications, to punish our own Sins, so to give Proof of the Detestation we have for our Crimes, and satisfy, to the best of our Power, the Divine Justice, which we have unworthily provoked? 'Tis true, Christ has fully satisfied for all our Sins; but his Satisfaction is not applied to us, except we conform to the Law of his Justice, in doing all that he requires at our Hands. And even then, whatever we do, has its whole Worth from the Merits of his Sufferings; so that tho', by our Afflictions or Rigours, we may obtain a Remission of the Punishment due to our Sins; yet this is not

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obtained but in Virtue of the Passion and Merits of Jesus Christ. Every truly repenting Sinner then ought to approve and love this Order of God's Justice, and even be willing to be punish'd for his past Offences ; as the Prodigal Son, returning home, confess'd he was unworthy to be called a Son, and likewise desired he might be treated, not as a Son, but as a hired Servant. He knew he had offended, he knew Punishment was due to his Offences, and therefore he espoused the Cause of Justice, while he petitioned to be humbled. This is the true Disposition of Penance, and what we ought ever to observe, as we desire the Effects of it in the Mercy of God.

Grant therefore, O merciful God, that with a cheerful Heart we may submit to all those Crosses which thou sendest, as the Chastisement of our Sins ; for this is to be patient under thy Justice. Grant we may be Instruments of thy Justice, in punishing in ourselves what we know deserves it : And if thus dispos'd, like *Daniel* we ask for Mercy, then like him we may hope to find it.

Tuesday,

Tuesday, Second Week in Lent.

LESSON.

3 Kings, C. 17. V. 8. ends V. 16.

THE Word of the Lord came to Elias, saying, Arise, and go to Sarepta in Sidon, and stay there; for I have commanded a Widow to feed thee. The Servants of God are many times in want, that others may have an Opportunity of exercising their Charity towards them; they suffer thus to encrease daily in Virtue themselves, by their being humbled; and their Sufferings are a Mercy to others, by trying their Goodness, and moving them to the giving Relief. The Practice of both these Parts, whether in suffering, or assisting those that suffer, is very proper in this Time; and to which soever of them God calls us, I wish we could as chearfully undertake it, as Elias and the Widow; since his Appointments are no less an express Command to us, in the Imitation of his Will, than was his Word that came to the Prophet. But then let it be our great Care to follow the Examples here proposed. The Prophet till now had

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been under God's own Care, being fed by Ravens; now he is sent to be relieved by a Widow; and, tho' he knew her not, yet being order'd by Heaven, he readily obeys. The Widow's Subsistence was brought to one Handful of Meal; and yet being demanded Relief by the Prophet, she supplies his Necessity, and trusts to God's Providence and Promise for her own Support. Here are great Things done on both Sides, and see how, without any sort of Sollicitude, Fear, or Disquiet; but with all the Readiness, Peace of Mind, and Conscience imaginable. 'Tis this manner of doing whatever is required of us I heartily recommend this Day; there being nothing more injurious to the just Devotion of this Time, than those two great Apprehensions, *Sollicitudes* and *Disquiets*, which ever attend too many Christians (otherwise well enough disposed) in what Almighty God has called them to suffer or to do; whilst, by these Passions of Weakness, they either wholly lose, or else considerably diminish, the Benefit and Value of all they do.

The Reason is, because however a prudent Care and Diligence in all we do be just and commendable; yet *Sollicitude* is ever unlawful, as proceeding from a want of Submission to the Orders of God, and disturbing

disturbing our Minds with an unprofitable Trouble. 'Tis evident, there is nothing can possibly befall us but what God wills ; and his Will being ever just, 'tis then plain we can apprehend nothing but the Execution of his Justice ; tho' we offend at the same time against his Goodness, in admitting of a certain Distrust, and fearing he has not a Care of us, or will not provide what is necessary for us. By which we seem to doubt of his Fidelity and Promises ; and thus indiscreetly provoke Almighty God to leave us to all those Inconveniences which we apprehend, and unhappily deprive ourselves of all the Succours which a full Confidence in the Divine Goodness might have obtained for us. The Rule then we ought to follow, in all Matters of Difficulty, must be, to omit no manner of Diligence, Application, and Pains, both by ourselves and Friends, as the Circumstances of our Affairs, in Prudence, seem to require ; and going on thus with as even and quiet a Temper as possibly we can, to wait then with Patience, and a certain Hope, that Almighty God will, in due time, open a Way for Relief. For this, I observe, is the Method of Providence ; if we proceed every Day doing what our Duty for that Time seems to exact, tho' in great Darkness and Uncer-

tainty, as to what is yet to come, Almighty God seldom fails of ordering something, by which he manifests his Will, and, removing all Indifference, plainly shews which way we are to take, and evidently determines our Lot. And now, whilst Divine Providence is thus watchful in all our Affairs, why should we not strive, as the Apostle advises, to lay aside all Sollicitude, and cast our Care ever upon him ; as being most assured, that if we discreetly endeavour on our Parts, he will not fail in his Assistance, but will bring all Things to a happy End ? This Hope and Confidence ought to carry us on chearfully in all we undertake, not doubting but God will be our Deliverer.

Tho' I cannot promise, that even on these Conditions every thing will still succeed to our Wishes ; for 'tis certain, there are Numbers of good People that have had great Miscarriages, and that suffer extreme Misery and Poverty. But what then ? All this ought not to put us out of our Way, or in the least diminish our Hope ; since such Evils may be no other than the Effect of that Love and Providential Care which God has over us, as being most expedient for our Eternal Good. 'Tis ever therefore to be remember'd, that tho' Almighty God be the certain Helper and Deliverer

Deliverer of all that sincerely trust in him ; yet 'tis not of all in the same manner : For he delivers some, by diverting the Evils, or removing them ; others, by giving them Patience necessary to bear them. And this second Way, if it be not most desirable, is at least more glorious to Christians. Now 'tis our Duty to leave the Choice of these Ways to Heaven : God is to deliver us as he pleases, who knows what is best for us ; whilst, if we chuse for ourselves, we may easily be misled by Inclination, and refuse that which may be most for our Advantage. And in this consists the Injustice of all Sollicitude and excessive Fears, in pretending to prescribe to God the Method of our Deliverance, which, it may be, is less to our Purpose, and not so agreeable to the Will of God. Remove from me, O Lord, all Sollicitude and interior Disquiet ; and grant me a true Submission to thy Will, that in all Difficulties I may ever preserve my Peace, and entirely leave my Deliverance to thy Choice. *Amen.*

Wednesday, Second Week in Lent.

LESSON.

Esther, C. 13. V. 8. ends V. 17.

LO R D God of Abraham, have Mercy on thy People ; for our Enemies design to destroy us, and ruin thy Inheritance. Mardonius thus addresses himself to Almighty God in a Prayer, which makes up this Day's Lesson. He knew his People were designed for Destruction by Aman, and therefore makes his Application to Heaven for their Deliverance. 'Tis now a seasonable Time for us to make the like Application, in order to obtain Succours of Heaven ; for certainly, if we consider our Circumstances aright, we have no less Reason to apprehend our Souls to be in Danger from the powerful Malice of our Spiritual Enemy, than the Jews were from the Designs of Aman. This Danger appears very great, if we look on the vast Numbers of those who daily fall a Sacrifice to his Malice : For nothing can seize us with juster Fears than the Sight of these dismal Effects. How almost infinite, alas ! are those Souls which are spiritually

spiritually dead ! And how small the Number of those, in whom appear the Signs of Life ! There appear no such Signs of Life in all those, who are without true Faith, which is the Life of the just Man, as the Apostle says, and without which it is impossible to please God. There are no such Signs in all those, who, believing aright, defile their Souls with criminal Passions, and exclude all Life by the Vices and Sensuality in which they indulge themselves. There are no such Signs in all those, who having been engaged in such grievous Sins, have taken no Care to return to God by a sincere Repentance. There are no such Signs in all those, whose Souls are possess'd by those Spiritual Vices of Pride, Envy, Hatred, Covetousness, Ambition, &c. Finally, there are no such Signs of Life in all those who love not Jesus Christ, since Anathema or Condemnation is pronounced by St. Paul against all those who love him not, *1 Cor. 16. 22.* Now whoever deducts all these, will soon find to how small a Number are reduced that little Flock, who are governed and live by the Spirit of Christ : And, besides these, how miserably subject are all others to the Power of Death !

If then the Power of the Enemy be so great, his Malice so ſuccesful, and the Numbers of thoſe that fall under him, whether by Violence or Craft, ſo very conſiderable; have we not every one Reaſon to fear, leſt we be alſo made a Part of his Triumphs, and be unhappyly involved in this Ruin? For, if ſo infinite are the Souls that perish, how can the beſt of us ſtand fearless and ſecure? If we were Part of a routed Army, wherein we ſaw our Companions falling on every Side by the Sword of the Enemy, ſhould not we alſo be ſtrucken with Terror, and think our Danger great? This then, if we are not already fallen, is our Danger at preſent: Souls perish on every Hand; they lie before us like ſo many Carcasses: And what Remedy have we? I know of none, but to join with *Mardoncheus*, and call in Heaven to our Aſſitance: *O God of Abraham, have Mercy on us thy People; for our Enemy designs to deſtroy us, and ruin thy Inheritance.* For ſince our Enemies Power is ſo much greater than ours, we muſt neceſſarily fall too, except we ſtrengthen our Party, and obtain of God to be Conſederate with us. All our Help then depends in having God on our Side; for by this Means only can we become ſuperior to our Enemy, and have ſufficient

ent Reason to despise him : For if God be with us, who is it will stand against us ?

This then ought to be a great Part of our Busines in this Holy Time, to prevail with Almighty God, by humble Fasting and fervent Prayer, that he will espouse our Cause, undertake our Protection, and defend us against the Power of our Enemy : That, whereas we are weak, and truly unable to stand our Ground, and hence have too great Reason to despair, he will daily vouchsafe us the powerful Succours of his Grace, and by his Assistance defeat all our Enemies Designs. But then, to obtain this, how serious and truly Christian ought our Fasting and Prayers to be ? How ought we to labour to *put on the whole Armour of God*, as the Apostle advises, *Truth, Justice, Faith, Hope, &c.* that, by the Help of these, *we may be able to resist in the evil Day, and stand fast.*

And because the War we are engaged in admits of no Truce, and scarce of any Cessation, therefore is it necessary we should be ever employ'd in fortifying ourselves by these Virtues, which are our Arms and Defence under God ; ever be perfecting our *Faith* and *Hope* in our Lord, and keep our *Justice*, or Righteousness in so

so good Repair, as to permit no Breaches in it, by which we may give the least Advantage to our Enemy. Upon this Account it is nothing less than a great Stupidity or Madness to enter into this Combat naked and unarmed, that is, without these Virtues; which is nevertheless the Practice of the greatest part of the World, who not only go thus, but even with an Excess of Rashness take Pains to open the Gates of their Souls to the Devil, make his Entrance into their Hearts more easy, and his Temptations more pressing and violent. This they do, by conversing with, and being fond of such Things or Company which heighten their Passions, and fill their Spirits with Vanity, and by neglecting such Helps as might fence them against the Enemy. Now what is to be expected from such Conduct as this, but an unhappy End? And may not we reckon them as already fallen who live after this Method; whilst their whole Happiness is in the Enjoyment of such Satisfactions which the Devil and the World lay before them; and the effectual Desire of Salvation (which consists in using the Means) is wholly extinct in their Hearts? Deliver us, O God, from Blindness and Stupidity, that by our Folly and Indiscretion we may never expose ourselves

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ourselves to the Snares of the Enemy :
Arm us with thy Grace, that we may
resolutely withstand all his Assaults, and
receive us under thy Protection : For 'tis
only by thy Mercy we can be safe.

Thursday, Second Week in Lent.

L E S S O N.

Jer. C. 17. V. 5. ends V. 10.

CURSED is the *Man* that places his
Confidence in *Man*, and in his *Heart*
departs from our *Lord*. The wicked Po-
licy of the *Jews* is reprehended here, who,
to strengthen and raise themselves, entered
into Confederacy with the *Egyptians*, and
other strange Nations, and trusted not in
the Protection and Promises of God ; and
therefore this Curse is here pronounced
against them. Too many *Christians* are
Jews in this Point, who for worldly Re-
spects enter into Society, and take Part
with sinful and wicked Men, and, to
preserve their Interest with them, run the
Hazard of departing from God. Thus
too many, for fear of disobliging Com-
pany, join and go on with them in such
Meetings

Meetings and Diversions, which they see to be prejudicial both to Soul and Body. Others carry on and encourage Discourses truly Uncharitable, Unjust, and Sinful, merely in Compliance with those they converse with. Others, not to lose the Opportunity of a Meal, or not to be cast out of a Service, stick not to make a ~~Jest~~ of Wickedness, support it by Flattery, and too often concur with it, to the Defiance of Conscience, the Breach of Faith, Honesty, and Truth. *And I wish, even amongst those whose Business is to direct others, there be not some who pass by in Silence many a gross Irregularity and Scandal, for fear the deserved Reproof of it might put them to the Inconvenience of seeking a new Accommodation.* And what is all this but letting worldly Respects take Place of Duty, and for some little Interest to enter into League with *Idolaters* and *Egyptians*? This is placing Confidence in Man, and departing from our Lord; and being the Sin of the *Jews*, I wish it be not attended even with a heavier Curse.

For my part, I cannot but think it a great Reflection on Christianity, to see this intolerable Injustice every-where prevail, that whether in private or publick Concerns, 'tis difficult enough to find Choice
of

of Persons, in whom a Trust of any Concern can with any tolerable Safety be reposed ; but there is ever Danger either of Loss or Miscarriage, through the Weakness, or rather Wickedness, of the Undertakers, who, forcibly carried away by the Power of private Interest, lose all Respect to Conscience and Duty : So that the Justice of any Cause gives now but very weak Hopes of Success, unless the Manager's Contrivance joins Interest or Dependance with it. This Evil it is which has corrupted all manner of Courts and Tribunals, and turns them but too often into Chairs of Pestilence : Religion and Gospel is exposed to its Abuses, and there is nothing so Sacred which is not subject to its most detestable Usurpation. And let not private Persons here presume of their Innocence, by throwing all the Blame on those in publick Employs : For there is scarce such a thing as Innocence, I fear, to be found in this Kind. I have already hinted at too many concern'd ; and if it be not the Case of all, let those who think themselves exempt, but faithfully call over even one Week, and 'tis to be feared they will make a Discovery, that 'tis not always Justice and Truth directs all they say or do ; but that Vanity and Flattery, some Interest or Self-love,

Fear

Fear or Compliance, often influences their Words and Actions ; and that for these base and unchristian Motives they abandon the Conduct of Duty and Truth, and are so far insincere and faithless to what they pretend.

And what is the Ground of all this, but that *Jewish Weakness* condemn'd in this Lesson ? Men dare not venture themselves in those Ways where Virtue and Duty direct them ; they dare not trust to those Promises God has made to such as walk by these Guides : Therefore they make another Interest ; seek the Favour of *Falshood, Dissembling, and Injustice* ; and hope to advantage themselves by the Assistance of these Enemies of God, having greater Confidence in their Help, than in his Promises. And is not this truly making Friends with the *Egyptians*, and Nations that are Strangers to the Living God ? Is not this putting Trust in Man, in the Weakness and Sins of Man, in the Suggestions of the Devil, more than in God and his Protection ? Is not this departing from God, forsaking his Ways, and the true Way too of being forsaken by God, and drawing down his Curse on their own Heads.

In this Point it is but too true, I fear, that, *Omnes declinaverunt*, all have gone astray ;

astray ; too many in Matters of Consequence ; and all in that beaten Track, of *excusing and defending themselves by Lies.* This is what is frequent even amongst pious, tho' not perfect, Christians. They know what in Truth, and according to God's Command, they ought to speak : But apprehending some *Anger, Blame, or little Reflection,* that *Truth* may bring upon them, they therefore fly to *Untruths*, and take Shelter under their Protection : They have not Courage enough to venture their Cause and themselves in God's Hands, and therefore take up the Devil's Arms, and, in effect, desire him to save them from the Harm they fear. And is not the Ground of this a real want of that *Trust and great Confidence* they ought ever to repose in God : A Confidence which ought to carry them on securely in the Ways of Truth, and make them hazard any Inconvenience, rather than have Recourse to his Enemy for Help : Which ought to inspire them with a certain Hope, that he will ever stand by them in all the Difficulties they foresee, and be a sufficient Recompence for all they suffer, for his Sake ; that is, for the Sake of Truth ? This is truly to have a Confidence in God, and not in Man : This is what the Spirit of Christ requires

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requires of every one ; and 'tis what we ought to pray for this Day. Pardon us therefore, O merciful Lord, for the many Times we have departed from our Duty and Truth upon human Respects, and even forsaken thy Ways, upon the weak Motives of Interest, Flattery, or Compliance : And grant us now that Strength of Spirit, and true Confidence in thee, that we may ever walk on securely in the Ways of thy Commandments, and rather venture all Inconveniencies under thy Protection, than seek for any Help out of Thee. *Amen.*

Friday, Second Week in Lent.

L E S S O N.

Gen. C. 37. V. 5. ends V. 22.

BEHOLD the Dreamer comes ; come let us kill him, and we will cast him into this old Pit, and say, A wild Beast has devoured him. They are the Words of Joseph's Brethren, full of Envy and Malice against him, and designing nothing less than to murder him. This is a Proposal of the greatest Wickedness, and laid before us in
this

this Lesson, to excite in us a Horror and Detestation, and let us know how displeasing all manner of Contention and Uncharitableness is to Almighty God, and how particularly Unchristian it is at this Holy Time. 'Tis now at this Time our great Business to make our Interest with Heaven, and earnestly apply ourselves to such Means as may be most effectual for obtaining Pardon of our Sins. Now tho' Fasting and Prayer be required of us by the Church for this End, yet what God exacts as absolutely necessary, and without which nothing else can possibly prevail, is *Charity*, or the Love of our Neighbour: Therefore it is St. Peter gives us this Advice to Christians, *Above all Things be careful ever to preserve mutual Charity among you; for Charity covers a multitude of Sins*, 1 Pet. 4. 8. And in St. Mark it is declared to be *more than all Sacrifices and Offerings*, 12. 33. And has not St. Paul expressly let us know, that nothing can avail without it? *If I give all my Goods to the Poor, tho' I give my Body to be burnt, and have not Charity, it profits nothing.* What then, if we observe this Time in rigorous Fasts, if we give liberal Alms, and Pray, will this move Heaven at all to favour us, if at the same time we have not Charity for all? The Word of

of God has said, it will not, and that cannot fail. 'Tis we only shall fail, if we perform our Duty by Halves, being nice in One Command, and that the less; and without all Conscience, as to the other, which is infinitely the greater, and such as on no Account can ever be dispensed with.

As many then as earnestly desire to be reconciled with God, by being raised from the Death of Sin, must not be wanting in this necessary Duty, which, above all, gives the best Assurance of Pardon, and of the new Life of Grace. *We know,* says St. John, *we are translated from Death to Life, because we love our Brethren;* *I John 3. 14.* The Mark of the Spiritual Resurrection then, according to this Apostle, is *Charity*, or the *Love of our Neighbour*; and 'tis not a probable or uncertain one, but such as is beyond all Doubt: *Nos scimus; We know, &c.* If therefore we are solicitous to secure the Prospect of our future State, we must not pass by this Point as a Matter of Indifference, but imprint it deep within our Souls, that without it we are most certainly indisposed for Heaven. This Charity being the most assur'd Sign of Life, 'tis not then our Neighbour's Interest that we love him; 'tis our own much more than his. Our Neighbour

bour may be a good Christian, and truly alive to God, tho' we love him not; but we cannot be so, if we have not this Love of him. The Practice then of this Charity being so much more our own Advantage than his, is it not a most unreasonable Revenge, to stifle all this Love within our Breast, nay easily to admit Aversion, Ill-will, and Hatred against him on any Pretext of Contempt, Injury, or Wrong? For is not all this Revenge against ourselves? 'Tis to kill our own Souls to be revenged of him; and is this his Punishment, or ours? Be not then so unwise as to take thy Adversary's Part, in being thy own Enemy: 'Tis but a poor Satisfaction for the Wrong received, to do thyself more Harm, and add to the Evil he has done thee. If thou wilt oblige thy Adversary then, do thus: But to befriend thyself, take patiently all the Ill received, preserve thy Love to him, and fail not to return him Good for Evil: Thus wilt thou heap Coals on his Head, and Blessings on thy own; since God will not fail to espouse thy Cause, and abundantly recompence the Injuries received, as he did in *Joseph*, by frustrating all his Brothers Designs, and turning their Malice to the Increase of his Glory.

But

But be here watchful not to deceive thyself: 'Tis but the Case of too many; they persuade themselves they have pardon'd their Enemies, and are in Charity with all; but yet can never meet those by whom they have been injured, with any sort of Satisfaction, but ever in their Looks and Mien betray an evident Aversion. And if the not being able to compose themselves be any Excuse for this, what is to be said for those who in their *Words* discover this Dislike, who never mention such Persons, but there is a sort of Gall mixed with all they say? So that by their unkind Expressions, and severe Reflections, and readily catching at every thing that is fit to lessen them, they evidently shew their Protestations of Love to be deceitful, and that there is still a Canker at the Heart. Believe me, this is a dangerous Sign; and therefore, as those who discover in themselves any plain Symptoms or Presages of a mortal Sickness, are strangely alarmed, and take no Rest, till by due Means they have done their best to prevent the Violence of the dreadful Evil: So with more Reason ought Christians to labour here. If they observe any sort of Aversion or Jealousy within themselves; if they perceive a Satisfaction to speak ill of, or reflect on any,

or

or a secret Joy at their Misfortunes ; these are ever Signs of a dangerous Indisposition, and not far from Death, and ought to awaken their Diligence to secure themselves. What a Restraint ought they to put on their Words and Thoughts, and, by special Favours to those very Persons, strive to wear out the old Dislike, by new Impressions of a better Stamp ? O Christians, how necessary is this to discharge the Heart from all manner of Bitterness or Aversion ? How necessary is this at this Time, since, however earnestly we may follicite Heaven for Pardon of our Sins, we have the Assurance of God's Word, that we must expect no such Grant, except we forgive all others from our Hearts ? Grant then, O merciful Jesus, that we be in this thy true Disciples, not deceiving ourselves by making a deceitful Peace ; but sincerely forgiving all, with all our Hearts, that so our Prayers and Fasts may be grateful to thee, and we not disappointed in the Pardon of our Sins, which we now come to ask.

Saturday, Second Week in Lent.

L E S S O N.

Gen. C. 27. V. 6. ends V. 39.

ISAAK said to Esau, *Thy Brother has come and taken thy Blessing.* The present Lesson is the History of Jacob providing Meat for his Father on his Death-bed, and receiving his Blessing before his Brother Esau came. Jacob's Diligence was abundantly rewarded: He gave Ear to his Mother's Advice; and, losing no Time in preparing what his Father lik'd, he obtained his Blessing, to the great Disappointment of his Brother, coming too late for what was already given away. 'Tis now the Church, our Mother, puts us in mind of the Death of our Redeemer approaching; and earnestly recommends, not to one alone, but to all her Children, to present themselves with such a Preparation, as they know is most grateful to him, that so they may happily receive his Blessing. And tho' there be no such thing here as one disappointing another, since God is infinite in his Goodness and Power, and has Legacies wherewith to enrich all his Children;

dren ; yet there are, in this Case too, *Jacob*s and *Esaus* ; there are those, who, by their Fervour and Diligence, like *Jacob*, out-go others, and, in the Plenty of a speedy Blessing, find the Recompence of their Industry and Endeavours ; and there are those too, who are so far behind in the just Performance of all their Duties, that 'tis to be fear'd, like *Esaу*, they lose their Blessing ; not by coming too late, but by not coming at all.

The due Preparation of a Christian, such as will effectually draw a Blessing from a dying Redeemer, requires great Care and Diligence : And as there was but one out of two that obtained this Patriarch's Blessing ; so 'tis to be feared, out of greater Numbers, there are but very few that follow *Jacob*'s Diligence, and are like to be privileged with him. *Nunc ergo*. Go presently, says his Mother to him, let there be no Delays : *Quomodo tam cito invenire potuisti?* says his Father. The Haste he had made was the first Thing that moved and opened his Father's Heart. 'Tis thus our Mother, the Church, says to us, *Nunc ergo* : Now, at this Time, prepare your Souls, and without any Delay, by your present Fasting, Alms, Prayer, and Self-denials, so purify them from all Irregularities and Sin, that they may be a

Delight, and even a Banquet to your Lord. This is the Advice of her, who designs for us our Father's Blessing: And how few are they who, with Jacob's Haste, seriously apply themselves to this Work? There are none but easily discover they have a great Task on their Hands; and that, to become truly pleasing to their God, they have very considerable Reformations to make, relating to their Spiritual State. How many as to the governing their Tongue, moderating their Passions, regulating their Affections, ordering their Conversation? How many as to the common Exercises of Piety, their manner of Praying, Fasting, Reading, Confessing, Receiving, &c. *Nunc ergo.* Now then we are commanded to undertake, carry on, and, with all our Industry, endeavour to perfect this Work. Happy they who follow these Directions, and with an equal Hand breaking through all the Difficulties of Nature and this World, strongly conclude all other Satisfactions to be but vain and passing Charms, and that their only Interest is to obtain the Blessing of their dying Lord; that so it may never come to be their sad Fate, with despairing *Esau*, in fruitless Groans and Tears to testify the Sense of their Miscarriage, when 'tis too late.

And

And is it not to be fear'd, this will be one Day all their Case, who, like him, go heavily on in a secure Dulness, think little of the Danger they are in, and trusting to I know not what, are ever saying within themselves, '*Tis Time enough; what need of Haste?*' And thus neglecting all present Means and Helps, live on in Sin, till at length, surpriz'd they are presented not before a Father, but a Judge, and, by deserved Punishments, are made sensible of all their past Delusions and Neglects: Neglects, I say; for these are generally the first Step into that Path, which leads to Vice and Hell. For why is it the greatest Number of Christians pray no better? They will not take the Pains necessary for this Work: They do as far as may be done with Ease; but when the Business requires an earnest Application, and laborious Care, here they give over their Task, and yield. The same is the Reason why they Fast not as they ought; why they master not Temptations, nor avoid the Occasions of Sin; because, being Lovers of themselves, and of their Ease, they have not Heart or Resolution to stand against those Difficulties, which must necessarily be master'd, to discharge their Duty; but they rather choose to accept the Satisfactions of Infirmitie and Sin, than

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take that Trouble to which their Obligation calls them. For want of this Trouble and Pains they first neglect, then quite omit, those Duties God requires of them; then Sin and Vice creep on, till by degrees the whole inward Man becomes corrupt: And thus, poor miserable deceived Souls! to indulge themselves the Satisfaction of a short and very imperfect Ease, they lose all Hopes of Rest Eternal; and to avoid a passing Trouble, such as has its Comforts too, they blindly cast themselves into everlasting Pains. Thus they go on unthinking and secure, and, like Esau, see but little of any Disappointment, till it shews itself, and their own Misery removes their Blindness. Prevent, O Lord, we beseech thee, all our Actions by thy Heavenly Grace, and so quicken us in every Duty, that, being never discourag'd through Fear or Trouble, we may overcome all Sloth and Negligence; and, thus performing all our Obligations with a just Diligence, we may be worthy to partake of the Merits of our dying Lord, and receive his Blessing.

Third

Third Sunday in Lent.

LESSON.

Ephes. C. 8. V. 1. ends V. 9.

BRethren, walk in Charity and Love, even as Christ loved us, and gave himself for us an Oblation to God. The Model by which we are to regulate our Love towards our Neighbour, is the Love of Jesus Christ towards us; which was such, as not only to bear patiently with the Unworthy, and bestow his Graces on them, but likewise to give his Life a Sacrifice for all. See here our Rule. 'Tis by this we are to endeavour not to let our Patience be overcome by any Provocations whatever can be given us; and to have a general Desire to do Good to all, without letting the Unworthiness of any in particular straiten this good Disposition of our Hearts: And, besides this, we ought to be ever ready to give our Life for our Neighbour, because his Salvation is infinitely more valuable than our Life. This last Part includes the former, as being most perfect; and we have often Occasions offer'd of practising it, as to some of

its Branches. For if our Obligation be to give our Life for his Salvation, much more are we bound to part with our Goods, our Rest, and our Time. How are we obliged to renounce many Satisfactions, to be ever cautious in avoiding every thing that may give him Offence, or any ways hinder his Salvation, and be careful to edify him in the Example of such Virtues as may invite him to Good? For certainly the Obligation of laying down our Life here prescribed, by the Example of Christ, reaches so far, as to bind us to do every thing, that may be necessary in order to his Happiness, and avoid every thing that can be a Hindrance to it.

How great a Tie then have they, who being the Substitutes of Christ, have taken on them the Care of Souls? Their Lives ought to be ever ready, much more their Time, their Rest, and all their Satisfactions, to be abandoned for their Neighbour's Good. Their Charge is to take Place of all; so that whatever may be as dear to them as their Hand or Eye, 'tis all to be cut off, rather than give Offence to any little one: For if Life is to be the Purchase of their Good, there is nothing under this can be dispensed with.

And may not here Parents, Masters, Magistrates, and all of the better Rank,
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in this see how great their Obligation is of discharging well their Duty, that none under their Charge be prejudiced by their *want of Care*, by ill Example: For how do they give their Life for their Neighbour, who, because they will not take the Pains, let him want such Things as may be the greatest Helps for his Salvation? How many are daily lost, for not having had their due Instruction? How many violently hurried into Vice by those very Passions, to which their Parents *Negligence*, or *fond Self-love*, has brought them up? 'Tis the great Misfortune of too many, in their tender Years, to have had no other Education, than what *Nature* suggested to their Parents; so that as these were either of an *insensible, negligent, or fond Temper*, so generally their Children suffer: And whilst the Consequences of either Extreme are equally pernicious to a Christian Life, how highly deficient are these Parents in this Duty, of giving their Life for their Neighbour, who, in a Case where it presses most, will not so far deny themselves, as to go out of their *Natural Way*, tho' their Childrens Souls but too much depend on the Method they take?

Their Crime is not much inferior, whose Station in a Family makes them

G. 4 remark-

remarkable ; so that what they do becomes an Example to others, whether Equals, or of a Lower Rank : For seeing the Disorders of their Life are an Encouragement to others to lessen their Respect for Virtue, and even draw them the same Way ; what Christians are they, who, being obliged to part with Life for their Neighbour's Soul, will not deprive themselves of their wonted Satisfactions, or quit an ill Custom, to prevent their Ruin ? They go on still, think how to please themselves ; but think not of that *Woe* pronounced against those who give Scandal to their Neighbour. For certainly as many *Woes* belong to them, as there are Souls prejudiced by their ill Example : Every one lost by them is a new Curse on their Heads : And this is the unfortunate Exchange they make ; they will not give their Life as God requires, or any Satisfaction for their Neighbour's Good ; but, to do him Harm, they give away their Souls.

Is there not again something of this Mis-carriage in the too frequent Discourse of many ? Some please themselves in Oaths, some in obscene Jests, and others in un-clean Discourse, such as St. *Paul* here says ought not to be named amongst Christians. And for others, who pretend to Piety ; how

how often by their Flatteries do they encrease the Distempers of their Neighbours Souls ? They plainly see the Infirmities to which they are subject : And tho' for these they often expose them behind their Backs, making them the Subject of their Wonder and their Scorn ; yet before their Face they fail not, by false Praises, and forced Arguments, to augment those very Evils, which they heartily condemn. 'Tis thus Pride and Curiosity, Jealousies, Contentions, Animosities, Expensive Gaming and Entertainments, with many other vicious Passions, grow up in too many ; and Christianity, by the same Degrees, most certainly decays. And where is their Charity all this while, who, being bound to contribute to the spiritual Advantage of their Neighbour, make it their common Practice to encrease his Evils, and help to overthrow his Soul ? O God, is this the Charity of Christ our Lord to us ? Is this according to the Model he has left us ? Deliver me, O Jesus, from this Fundamental Error ; and since thou hast been pleased to give thy Life for thy Servants, permit me not, by any Ways, to oppose this Design of thy Mercy, by injuring those, whom thou hast purchased at so dear a Rate : May I ever join with thee, in contributing to their Good ; and for this

End, be ever willing, not only to quit my evil Customs, my Ease, my Goods, but even my Life too ; for thus only can I pretend to love my Neighbour, as thou hast loved us.

Third Sunday in Lent.

G O S P E L.

Luke, C. II. V. 14. ends V. 28.

JE S U S was casting out a Devil, and it was Dumb. Tho' they are but few, who are wholly Tongue-ty'd by the Devil ; yet their Number is greater, who, by his Impressions, are render'd Spiritually Dumb. Speech was given us by God for certain determinate Ends ; and such as observe no Rule in their Words, nor direct them to those Ends, may be esteemed Dumb Christians, however otherwise they abound in Words. *Væ tacentibus de te, quoniam loquaces muti sunt.* For all such Words are to be reputed no better than the Outcries of Madmen, who publish their disorder'd Fancies, and speak whatever is suggested by their ungovern'd Passions.

To

To discover more in particular the Number of those Christians, who are Spiritually Dumb, we must consider the Christian Use of Words; the first is that of Blessing God, and offering to him a Sacrifice of Praise; this, performed to God's Honour, is more for our Advantage, than his; it is the Means for obtaining new Blessings; it is the Remedy of our Evils, and Comfort of our Afflictions; it is to satisfy the End of our Being. The Old World was made for the Praise of God's Power, and the New for the Praise of his Mercy: So that the Praise of God is the End of all Things: This shall be the only Employment of the Blessed for all Eternity, and this Life being an Apprenticeship of the next, for which we are born, this same ought to be a principal Part of our Business here. Whatever Christian then is silent, as to those Praises, which are due from him to God, ought to be esteemed Dumb, and as one possessed by a Dumb Devil; since such Silence can be the Effect of no other Impressions, but such as are from the Devil.

And if under this Duty of Praising God, be comprehended the Obligation of Prayer, which is both a Confession and Praise of his Mercy and Power, and we
here

here put into our Account, first those, who have no time observed for daily Prayer; and then those, who being punctual in their Hours, are yet careless in their Devotions, or through the vicious Disorder of their Hearts, are very much indisposed for what they pretend to perform; how will the Number of Dumb Christians be increased, since all these are wanting in the due Use of their Tongues?

Another Duty, is that of Confessing our Sins both to God and his Ministers; and to be silent in this, is a certain Argument of being possessed by the Dumb Devil; for Impenitence being joined, from the Beginning with his Crime, he is hence become the King of all impudent Souls, nothing being more hateful to him, than a sincere Confession of Sins. And hence he is ever industrious in raising a false Modesty in Christians, in making them ashamed to Confess, what they were not ashamed to Commit; in making them more averse to the Remedy, than to the Disease; and persuading them to conceal that, which cannot be hid: In this putting them upon the worst of all Engagements, that is, upon hiding that for a short time, which shall be made publick for all Eternity, and which would

would have been eternally hid, had it been here acknowledged, as was prescribed them. These are some, who are in the possession of the Dumb Devil, being thus, by him, not only deprived of the Remission of their Sins, but likewise strengthen'd in their ill Habits, and harden'd in Sin.

There are others again Spiritually Dumb; those, I mean, who are then Silent, when Charity, Justice or Truth obliges them to speak. Those, who consider, how many live in Ignorance of their most substantial Duties, and how many in the Practice of what is scandalous or unwarrantable, must hence suspect their Silence, under whose Care they are, and begin to apprehend, that either Sloth, Indifferency, or the Fear of Displeasing, ties up their Lips; and of what kind must that Tie be, when God and their Duty require them to speak? Those again, who consider how often the Innocent are oppressed, the Absent slandered, the Virtuous suspected or reproached, and how few Advocates they find to make their Defence, cannot but fear such Silence; and that when Charity is overawed by Interest, or other human Respects, the Silence is from no other, but the Dumb Devil.

Thus

Thus a little Reflection is enough to inform us, that great Numbers of Christians are under the Impressions of this evil Spirit: And if we make farther Enquiry, it may be easily discovered, that as the general Cause of People's being Dumb, is because they are Deaf, and therefore know not how to speak, because they do not hear; so it is with those, who are spiritually Dumb: The principal Occasion of their not speaking, is because they are Deaf; they do not hear God, and are without a Sense of those Truths, which should oblige them to speak, and have the Influence on their Words; hence they abide Silent, when Duty calls for Defence.

Here is the general Misfortune of Mankind; they have their Ears and Hearts open to the Impressions of Self-love, Interest, Pleasure and Ambition; and as Men always speak the Language they are used to hear, and are silent as to all others; so the generality of Christians being from their tender Years accustomed to the Language of these corrupt Passions, they are ever ready to speak in the Language they have heard; but seldom giving Attention to the Words of God, of Charity, Justice and Truth, this is like an unknown Tongue to them; and therefore

fore they are Dumb, when they should speak in this Language.

Hence it is, Christ, in the Conclusion of this Gospel, pronounces those blessed, who hear the Word of God, and keep it, that is, who are so attentive to the Principles and Truths of the Gospel, that these have the Direction of their Lives, and over-rule all other corrupt Maxims of the World; for such Christians being accustomed to hear, are ever ready to speak the Language of Duty, and hence are freed from the Scandal of being possessed with the Dumb Devil.

And may not then all Christians here easily apprehend, how much it is their Interest, to make a right Use of the Time, in which we now are, by a serious Application of their Minds to the Study of God's Word, by Hearing, Reading and Meditating whatever may be proper for possessing their Hearts with those Truths, that lead to Salvation? Men become worldly, by conversing with the World; and they cannot be Christians in Fact, but by conversing with Gospel or Christian Truths. Their present Business then ought to be, effectually to convince themselves, That eternal Happiness is the End of their Creation; that it is infinitely more valuable, than all the Goods

Goods and Satisfactions of this Life ; that it ought to be desired and sought by them, according to its Value, and the Interest they have in it ; that they are Miserable amidst all the Enjoyments of Life, if they provide not for Eternity, by doing the Will of God, and keeping the Commandments ; that there is a Difficulty in this, and Danger of Miscarriage, from the Inclinations of corrupt Nature, from the Temptations of the Devil, from the Authority of ill Example, and Snares of the World : That it is their Duty to stand with Resolution against all these, in Compliance with the Divine Will ; that this being not to be effected, but by Self-denials, Labour and the Assistance of God, they are to make this their daily Business, and be ever mindful, that the Neglect of this puts all to the Hazard.

If the Heart were truly possessed with these Truths, Christians would, by this Way, not only understand the Language of the Gospel, but likewise speak it ; God and their Salvation would have as much the Influence of their Words, as the World has upon Worldly Men. But how much Industry is necessary for this ? O God, do thou inspire thy Servants with an industrious Zeal answerable to their Wants,

Wants, and the Difficulty of what they have to learn ; teach them to be more solicitous for Heaven, than for Earth ; let the Principles of Salvation so rule in their Hearts, as to command a general Silence, as to whatever is hurtful to themselves, or others, and make them skilful in no other Language, but that of the Gospel, that so learning from thee to speak, they may be Dumb only as to what the Devil suggests.

Monday, Third Week in Lent.

L E S S O N.

4 Kings C. 5. V. 6. ends V. 15.

Eliseus said to Naaman, Go and wash seven times in Jordan, and thou shalt be cleansed. Washing once in Jordan, if God had so pleased, might have perfectly delivered Naaman from his Leprosy ; but he commands him seven times to wash ; to signify to us (for all was then done in Figure) the repeated Endeavours and Care we ought to have in using those Means, which God has appointed for our Spiritual Cure. It was the Sacrament of Penance was

was then shewn us in a Type ; and in those mysterious Washings may not we see, with what great Diligence we ought to apply ourselves to every Part ? Not slightly to pass over our Examens, but with the strictest Eye to search into every Corner of our Soul ; to look diligently, and look again, that so we be not imposed on with false Colours, fair Pretexts, and under these Disguises permit gross Evils to defile our Souls. Alas ! how many ill Habits, how many dangerous, and even sinful Passions, expressed but too often in Words and Actions, are found in those, who go to this *Jordan*, and by Confession think to wash themselves ? It is the Misfortune of too many not to see their own Infirmities ; and tho' they are quick-sighted enough to observe and condemn many Evils in their Neighbour, yet they see them not, when it is what they fall into themselves. Thus we carry many Evils with us unseen to Confession, and to the Grave ; because we examine ourselves but with passing Glances, take what appears at first sight, what is gross and notorious ; but as for Variety of Spiritual Sins, which lie under many Folds of Self-love, Interest, Convenience, Pride, &c. these are but too long undiscerned, because they require a long Observation, a watchful and

and impartial Eye, to make the Discovery. Have we not Reason then, with *David*, often to beg, *Illumina, Domine, tenebras meas?* Enlighten, O Lord, we beseech thee, our Darkness; and add to our Prayer our best Endeavours to know ourselves, make frequent Searches, and omit no Care that may be necessary; and yet be very careful too not to increase the Darkness, by being scrupulous.

The like is necessary as to the other Part: It is easy to think we are truly sorry for our Sins, and that we truly purpose to amend; and it is as easy to be deceived in this. What if these Thoughts of Sorrow are framed, and truly pass through our Understanding? May not all this be, and our Hearts be still the same, Proud, Perverse, Corrupt? And who shall remove this Uncertainty, and with Assurance determine, as often as we confess, whether our Sorrow be hearty and real, or only imaginary, and in conceit? It is true, the Fruits of Repentance appearing in *virtuous Endeavours*, and a *better Life*, is what affords some Peace. But yet we are generally in the dark: A Darkness which is both the Effect and Punishment of Sin, and therefore to be submitted to as just, and very capable of being made use of to our Advantage;

tage ; to ballance that Pride to which we are subject, to keep us in a perpetual Dependance, and to oblige us frequently to renew our Sorrow, often to excite our Detestation of past Sins, never to be over-confident of what we have already done, but still endeavour to do better ; that so, if there has been any Defects through want of Care, all those may be now supplied ; and that by our present Fervour we may now regain the Favour of Heaven, and thus prevent all possible Miscarriage. *Lava septies* ; Wash therefore seven times. Use still thy best Endeavours to repent, but still remember often to repent the same ; repent, and still repent again.

The same Method is to be observed in the Third Part, which is *Satisfaction*. For tho' a Sinner, by his sincere Repentance and Absolution, has received new Life, yet this Life is generally so languishing and infirm, that it is difficult to preserve it, except due Care be used to strengthen it by continual Exercises of Piety. The Consequences of Sin are many, and many ill Effects it leaves behind it on the Soul, by which it is often in danger of relapsing ; and there is no more assured Means of removing these, than to follow that very Method, prescribed as
the

the Remedy of Sin. And when a Christian seems something advanced beyond this State of Weakness, and that he is in some manner established in a Spiritual Life, yet ought he to continue still his Exercise of Penance, in proportion to the Irregularities of his former Life. For it being the Practice of the Primitive Church, for the more grievous Sins, to appoint Penances of several Years, and sometimes of the whole Life; tho' this be not now enjoined, yet the Spirit of the Church being unchangeable, it is but just Penitents should still preserve the same Disposition of Heart, which she designed to imprint in them by those longer Penances. This Disposition is that *Spirit of Penance*, by which a Christian is to manage all Difficulties whatever of his Life, as likewise to practise many Self-denials and Holy Exercises; and having ever his Sins in view, make them all Sin-offerings, to appease and satisfy the Justice he has provoked; all which he may hope will find Acceptance through the Merits of his Suffering Lord, with whom he joins in all he does. *Lava septies*: Wash therefore seven times; and, as the Holy Fathers advise, be ever mindful of thy Sins, that so thou may'st ever preserve an humble Mind, and with this Mind

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Mind accept all Troubles as from the Hand of Justice, which punishes Sin. Preserve, O Lord, this Spirit of Penance within us, that so we may not carelessly make use of those Means, thou hast appointed for our Good ; but with Diligence and Humility perform all, thou requirest from our Hands.

Tuesday, the Third Week in Lent.

L E S S O N .

4 Kings C. 4. V. 1. ends V. 7.

Eliseus said to the Widow, *Go sell the Oil, and pay thy Creditor what is his Due, and do thou and thy Children live of the rest.* A good Direction for such as are in Debt, first to satisfy their Creditors, and then to live of what remains : *To live,* the Prophet says ; for if this may be, it is well : He allows nothing to keep up *State,* or feed *Extravagancies :* These are all to be retrenched, when *Justice* calls for what is usually spent in their Support. These Conditions the Prophet left, and thus was this miraculous Supply to be divided betwixt her *Creditors* and her

her own *Necessities*. Now if all Abilities and Estate, which others have, are equally the Gift of God with this, ought not the same Method still to be observed? What means then the daily Expences of so many in Sports, Diversions, Vanities, Excess, whilst their poor Creditors are wanting Necessaries, and would gladly feed on the very Crums of what they prodigally cast away? Where is the Justice of this Method? Nay, where is the Christianity, whilst *Justice* is thus left out? And what is their Plea? Nothing but the *Inconvenience* or *Difficulty* of doing otherwise. They are willing to be just, and satisfy all; but this is attended with so many Inconveniences. And are not these nice Christians now, who would go along with every Duty, as far as they can go with Ease; but then shake Hands with it, when there appears a Difficulty? Is it not to be feared they will do the like with other Virtues, with *Faith*, with *Charity*, and *Hope*, and even quit these too, when they can be no longer easy in their Profession? Methinks the renouncing one is enough to raise this Jealousy. For certainly those true Christians, who are ready to suffer all Extremities for their Faith, both as to their Persons, Family, Estate and Life, would with a proportioned Willingness

lingness be ready to accept the like, rather than forsake the Cause of other Virtues. They know there is no one Virtue, but may have its Martyrs; and no question have an assured Hope of meeting with the same Reward, whether they suffer for *Justice*, or for *Faith*: And on this Score they are very careful never to tire their Creditors with unwelcome Delays, in Favour of themselves and their own Convenience; but ever chuse to satisfy *Justice*, notwithstanding Variety of Difficulties, which may attend the performing this Duty; for whatever in this Case they come to suffer, they know it is for Justice sake. Pay then thy Creditor what is his Due, and live thou of what remains.

Besides these, there are other Debts, which every Christian, with the like Exactness, is bound to satisfy: And it is now a proper Time to sum up these Accompts. See then now, how much thou standest indebted for all thou hast ever rashly or designedly spoken, to the lence, Prejudice or Lessening of thy Neighbour. See again what Injury thou hast ^{I believe} done him by thy ill Example; how far thou hast, in Words or Actions signified encouraged him to Evil; what dangerous, nay sinful Impressions thou hast made in his Soul by thy prophaneself, ^{Widow} ^{she} lewd

lewd Discourses, which, it may be, have been the first Step to his Ruin: And if thou art so happy, as to discover nothing of this; yet see, at least, what Damage thou hast done him, by being wanting in thy seasonable Advice and good Instruction; for Silence is too often follow'd with weighty Mischiefs. How many hast thou seen both say and do such Things as truly deserved Reproof, for which thou hast unprofitably censur'd them behind their Backs, but hast not had Charity enough to inform them of these Failings betwixt thyself and them? Thus, for want of a friendly Monitor, have they advanced in Evil, which upon a seasonable Reproof might probably have been redress'd: Thus at least mightest thou have deliver'd thy own Soul from the Guilt of their Sins, for which now, it may be, thou standest indebted.

Consider then now all these Debts thou hast contracted by thy ill Example, by Detraction, Neglect, or uncharitable Silence, and see which way to satisfy them: Neigh I believe thou wilt find none more effectual, than that here suggested by the Widow's Oil, which, as St. Augustine says, signifies that *Mercy* and *Compassion* we are bound to shew to others. Whilst this Widow had only a little Oil to serve her self, she could pay no Debts; but having

more Vessels full, she then discharged this Duty. If thy Charity extends not beyond thyself, thou may'st be still considerably in Debt ; but if once it begins to abound and flow to every Neighbour, thus may'st thou hope in Time to even all Accompts. Observe then diligently on every Side, and see where any Distress calls for thy Assistance. Let those have the first Place whom thou hast any ways injured ; but if this can't be, lay hold of every Opportunity that presents itself, and endeavour still to shew such a Charity, as may have a Proportion to thy past Faults. Reflect then what chiefly these have been, and so let thy present Charity be regulated. Thus may'st thou Exercise thyself, in being favourable in every thing thou hearest, in which thy Neighbour's Reputation is any ways concern'd ; in being careful to give good Example, discountenance all evil Ways, and encourage Virtue ; in instructing and laying sound Principles in all thou may'st ; in charitable Advice ; and, as far as it may be with Hopes of Benefit, seeking fit Opportunities of putting every one in mind of their Failings, so to contribute to their Amendment. Thus, if thou art careful to extend thy Charity, and distribute this Oil of Mercy on every Side, by this Means thou wilt pay thy Debts, and satisfy

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satisfy for all thy past Transgressions ; and of what remains thy Soul will live : For nothing gives us a surer Title to God's Mercies, than that Mercy we shew to others. Grant then, O merciful Lord, that, by practising this constant Charity to others, I may obtain a Discharge of all those Sins, by which I have any ways injured my Neighbour : For as these have brought Death on my Soul, so 'tis only by their Release my Soul can live.

Wednesday, Third Week in Lent.

LESSON.

Exod. C. 10. V. 12. ends V. 24.

THE People said to Moses, Speak thou to us, and we will hear ; but let not God speak to us, lest we die. This Lesson contains the Second Table of the Law ; that is, all the Commandments relating to our Neighbour. Now Almighty God appeared so terrible to the People of the Jews, in publishing these his Laws, that, wholly surprized with Fear, they cried out, Let not God speak to us. I believe, were God to expound these his Laws to Christians,

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they would be seiz'd with no less a Terror, than the *Jews* in this first Promulgation ; and find so much greater Obligation in them than they commonly imagine, that they would cry out with them, *Let not God speak to us, lest we die.* This is the great Misfortune of too many ; they make so large a Construction of the Commandments, in Favour of their own Inclinations, Interest and Passions, that they deceive themselves in thinking they keep them, whilst they live in the open Breach of them. Is not this the Occasion of what we observe in the Lives of great Numbers ? They say and do such Things, as raise Wonder and Scandal in all their sober Friends, and give Offence to Strangers ; and yet go and discourse the Point with them, and you will discover a certain Peace and Security accompanying them, even in Actions that are wholly unjustifiable : For they have found the Expedient of some ill-reason'd Case, by which they open the narrow Way, and make it wide enough for them to go on, without renouncing themselves, or laying down the Corruptions of Nature. Hence it is we see very great Uncharitableness, Animosities, Contentions, most intolerable Injustices, Frauds, Over-reachings, and Variety of other Evils, even amongst those who are reputed Honest and Good ; nay,

nay, and this, as they seem to delude themselves, without ever breaking any one Commandment. Thus they go on, charm'd into a false Peace, by the Violence of their own Passions, which they mistake for Reason; and thus they live. But now, if Almighty God should once please to interpret his own Law to them, how would this Sight of themselves and their own Wickedness fill them with Dread, and make them cry out with the *Jews*, *Let not God speak to us, lest we die.* For they would see nothing but Death before them, as the necessary Consequence of their unchristian Proceedings.

And what is the first Step to this Misfortune, but their refusing that other Part which the *Jews* desired? They said, *Let Moses speak to us, and we will hear.* But these will be under the Conduct of no *Moses*; except, after frequent Trial, they can find such an one, as will indulge their Inclinations, and suggest to them Cases even to make their Vices lawful. He that will permit them, at least, to go on their own Way, shall be their Director; and thus they proceed into the Mouth of Hell with some Satisfaction, so they have but a Guide to go with them. But if he proves one, that will not, in Silence, be witness of all their Extravagancies, but with severe

Censures, at all fit Opportunities, declares against them, then such an one is not a *Moses* for them.

This is the Condition of many: But their Number is greater, who being sensible of a heavy Weight on their Conscience, and seeing their Souls lying under great and very dangerous Disorders, such as require the Assistance of the most skilful Hand, purposely however avoid those, whom they know to be thus experienced, and chuse to go to one who will only hear, but say nothing to them; or else find out some Stranger, who being unacquainted with the true State of their Souls, cannot apply to them Remedies proper for their Cure. Thus they pretend to repent, and yet over-ruled by a sort of vicious Modesty, or blinded with Pride, they decline those who would best help them to amend. And what is this but shuffling with their Duty, and deceiving themselves with the Form, without having any Sincerity in their Hearts; since having *Moses* to speak to them, they desire not to hear him?

Another great Occasion of this Evil amongst Christians, is their general Unwillingness to have any Sort of *Moses* speak to them, or put them in mind of the common Failings, which they observe in them. 'Tis but too undeniable a Truth, that we all

all have Faults, tho, 'tis true, some greater than others: And altho' we profess that we desire to love God, and save our Souls; tho' we believe our Sins are our only Enemies, that can possibly hinder the obtaining these Eternal Goods; yet who is there that can bear the being minded of their Faults? Who is there that can sincerely say in this Case, *Let Moses speak to us, and we will bear?* For my part, among all the Tasks that belong to a Christian, I know of none more difficult than this; for tho' you may freely tell any of a Discomposure or Spot in their Cloaths, nay, of Dirt in their Face, and be thank'd; yet scarce so, if you tell them of their Faults. Hence it is too often that Friends, who live together, and are Friends in every thing else, are not at all so in this; while seeing Failings in one another, they dare not venture to speak; but either wanting Courage themselves to be Christian Friends, or apprehending some ill Consequence, they let them go on, till at length, when Death comes, they have God to speak to them in Terror; because they would not accept of a *Moses* to do it before-hand in Peace.

This shews what a Pride we have within us, and how much we suspect it in every Neighbour: It shews how much we are govern'd by *human Respects*, and how little

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of true Christian Charity there is amongst Christians : It shews us what a Task we have on our Hands, and how unfit we are for the Devotion and Piety of this Holy Time. Infinitely miserable we are and weak, and yet infinitely proud : Let us beg then this Day an effectual Remedy of all our Evils, that we may be so exact in all our Duties, that we need not fear to have God himself speak to us : That, in the mean time, he will inspire a true Moses to direct us ; give us Grace to hear and follow him ; and, as we desire to amend our Faults, so also be ever willing to be informed of them.

Thursday, Third Week in Lent.

L E S S O N.

Jerem. C. 7. V. 1. ends V. 7.

TRUST not in lying Words ; saying, *The Temple of our Lord, the Temple of our Lord.* The false Prophets persuaded the Jews, that, having the Temple of our Lord with them, they needed not to doubt of being ever in his Favour and Protection, notwithstanding all their Iniquities and perverse

verse Ways. Therefore Almighty God inform'd them of this Imposture, commanding his Prophet to stand in the Gate of the Temple, and say, *Hear the Word of the Lord, all you Men of Judah, that enter in at these Gates to Worship.* Thus says the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, *Amend your Ways and Works, and I will dwell with you in this Place: Trust not in lying Words, saying, The Temple of our Lord, &c.* Thus letting them know there was no trusting at all for them in the Temple, but only in the Amendment of their Lives. And is not this Advice now as necessary for us, as for the Jews; since we are not less easy in hearing false Prophets, and trusting in lying Words, then they? We are born into this World with Falsity, Deceit, and Lies, mixt with our very Nature; these grow up, and are strengthen'd in us by our Nurses, Attendants, and very Parents, who all contribute, by their mistaken and hurtful Kindness, to make us in Love with ourselves, to be obstinate in our own Ways, to be violent in every thing we desire, to come to an early Knowledge of, and be fond of Vanities, to admire Novelties, to be charm'd with Curiosities, with Variety of such like unprofitable Qualifications, which is indeed nothing else but hearkening to false Prophets and Lies. For 'tis to be taught to

value Things as good and advantageous, which indeed are the only Things that can possibly ruin us ; 'tis to be taught such Lessons, which, if ever we come to the Knowledge of our own Good, we must then labour all the Remainder of our Lives to unlearn. Thus we begin our Lives ; and when our youthful Years afterwards put us forth into the World, we are commonly led on in the same Path : For what is it but False Prophets and Lying Words that encourage young People in the Practice now of more dangerous Vanities, in expensive Diversions, and hurtful Entertainments ; and that make them in Love with the World, with its Follies and Pleasures ? And are they not the same, that impose on those of a riper Age ; since there is no Age exempt from the Charms of Titles, Honours, State, Riches, &c. These are generally look'd on as substantial and desirable Goods, such as bring Rest to the Possessors ; 'tis with this Thought we are often carried on in most of our Undertakings, seeing Happiness, as we imagine, at a distance before us, and often promising ourselves Blessings, if we can but accomplish our Designs ; and when all comes to be in our Power, the Possession falls so much short of our Hopes, that in the Enjoyment we experience all to be Vanities and Lies.

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This same Method of Falsity and Lying we pursue in our Spiritual Life. We promise at the Font to renounce the Devil and World, with all their Works and Pomps, and after this solemn Engagement, spend a great Part of our Lives in the Profession and Practice of what we have renounced. We pretend to Humility, and live in Pride; we seek ourselves, and commend Self-denials; we value Charity, and on every Occasion are acting against it; we make Profession of the Love of God, and yet our whole Business is Interest, Vanity, and the World.

Thus we go on still in our very Devotions, and pretended Flights towards Heaven: We lift up our Voices to our Creator, and often call him *Our Lord, and our God*; but without the Obedience and Love due to him on these Titles: We pray that *his Will be done*; but at the same time rebel against him, and follow our own. How often do we cry for Mercy, and say, *We repent and are sorry, and heartily troubled for having offended, and resolve to amend?* But where is the Change of the Heart? Where are the true Dispositions of a contrite Soul? O certainly, were it all true as we say, we should not be so easy in neglecting our Duty, and relapsing into our former Weaknesses. Again, how often do

do we kneel, bow down, strike our Breasts, lift up our Eyes, our Hands, and our Voice; and in these Motions pretend a Reverence to our Lord, and Desires of approaching to him; when, God knows, at the same time we are void of all Respect, and our Hearts are far from him? Thus we live on in Lies, and a great Part of our Confidence is trusting in Lying Words: On these false Grounds is built a great Part of our Devotion and Piety; and, when the Searcher of Hearts has separated all the Dross and Shew of our Holiness, how small a Portion of what is Solid and True will remain behind?

O God, how miserable are we! We confess our Weakness here before thee, and own that our whole Lives are a Mixture of Flattery, Presumption, Deceit and Lies. We know, that however we have thy Truth, thy Faith, thy Temple and Church with us; all this will not avail to Salvation, except we have Truth in our Lives, except we do what we say, and practise what we profess. Inspire then, O God, our Hearts with the Light of thy Truth, that we may be sincere in all our Duties, and ever remember, that except we amend our Ways, thou wilt not dwell with us.

Friday,

Friday, Third Week in Lent.

L E S S O N.

Numb. C. 20. V. 2. ends V. 13.

THE Children of Israel assembled themselves against Moses and Aaron, and in a Seditious Way, said to them, give us Water, that we may drink. This People being prest with Thirst in the Desart, had Recourse to *Moses* and *Aaron* for their Relief: And tho' the manner of their Address, in a Tumultuous Way, be not at all commendable, yet certainly the earnest Application they made, in their Necessities, to the Servants of God, under whose Conduct they had been placed, is a thing worthy of our Imitation, being approved of by Heaven itself in some manner, in supplying them with a miraculous Fountain issuing out of a Rock. There's no question but *Moses* and *Aaron*, having the Care of this People, were oblig'd to have prevented this Tumult by their seasonable Instructions; and God sufficiently censur'd this their Omission, by charging them with the sinful Unbelief of their Flock, and not permitting them to lead the People into the Land of Promise, in Punishment

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of their Offence. 'Tis plain, as many as have others under their Care, as in this, they have a Place of Honour ; so have a Charge too, and such as brings the Weight of many others Sins upon them, besides their own ; so that, while they have Reason to be satisfied many times with the State of their own well order'd Conscience, they are still very Criminal in the Sight of God, by reason of their Sins of those entrusted with them, which ought to have been prevented by their Care. 'Tis often an indulgent and easy Temper, that being unwilling to disturb itself or others, passes by many Faults, and gives them time to grow into great Disorders. Others are contented to go on in the Steps of their Predecessors, taking in all their Faults as well as their Employment ; not enquiring what their Duty obliges them to, but only whether they go on in the Track ; as if to err by Example, would be an Apology for their going out of the Way. Others again, out of a downright neglect of their Duty, and the little concern they have how things go with those under their Charge, give all Opportunity possible to the Enemy to sow his Tares, while they are thus asleep. And hence it is we see so much Corruption spread itself, and even reign amongst Christians ; because they, whose

whose Obligation it is, by their watchful Care to keep up good Discipline, and remedy, as far as in them lies, all growing Disorders, go on insensible of their Charge, and vainly think themselves to be good Christians, while at the same time they are *Ill Parents, Careless Masters, or Negligent Pastors.* But certainly this is a Fatal Error, and attended with most pernicious Consequences, such as, notwithstanding their supposed Innocence, makes their Sins as numerous as are the Extravagancies of all those under their Care, which have been occasion'd by their Connivance or Neglect. These are therefore to remember they have more Souls besides their own to give an Account of, and that being happily free from all Personal Sin, they may be still unfortunately excluded from the Land of Promise for the Sins of others, whose Guilt falls on them.

But whatever is the Neglect of those under whose Charge we are, yet this does not at all excuse Christians for those many Spiritual Necessities and Defects, under which they lie for want of this Care: For if God, in his Goodness, has appointed others to watch over and direct us, yet he has not in this dispensed with our taking care of ourselves. And therefore, as the *Israelites* in their Necessity staid not

in their Tents there to perish by Thirst, but with all the Eagerness possible applied themselves to *Moses* and *Aaron*, saying, *Give us Water, that we may drink*, so Christians ought to do. And they do it indeed in all their Temporal Wants; very few being so forgetful or careless, but if they see themselves like to suffer through their Neglect, whose Busines it is to assist them, they presently make their Necessities known, they speak and speak again; and if any other Interest besides their own be necessary to prevail, they fail not to procure it; and if nothing succeeds, they know to change Masters and Places, rather than want where they are. Thus all in the Affairs of this World see where to go, and are not backward in crying out, *Give us Water, that we may drink*. But how few are they, that do it in the Concerns of the Soul? How many do we find that pass for true *Israelites*, think themselves true Christians and Catholicks, and yet are under very great Spiritual Necessities, having their Souls near starving for want of due Knowledge and Instruction in their Duties, and yet go on in silence, without asking for help? Some there are, that go to Mass for many Years, and know very little or nothing of it: Others go to the Sacraments as long, having the Form,

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Form, but understanding little of their Substance, or of the due Preparation required on their Parts : Others live in the constant Practice of wronging their Neighbours, and know not what Justice is : Others in that of daily defaming their Neighbours, in Contentions, Ill-will and Dislike of them, and know not what Charity is : Others in habitual Obstinacy, Pride, and sinful Self-love, and know not what Humility is : Thus of all States and Conditions there are too many very considerably wanting, not only in the Practice, but even in the Knowledge of their most essential Duties ; and tho' all this be but too often occasion'd by the Silence and Neglect of those, under whose Care they are, and will fall one Day so heavy on them, as to exclude them from the Land of Promise ; yet why do they themselves sit still under these Necessities, and not seek for Remedy, by demanding Help from such, as are able to assist them ? Why do they not as earnestly cry out for the Water of Life to refresh their Souls, as for the Relief of their Temporal Wants ? The *Spiritual* is much the greater Concern of the Two, and requires the greater Diligence and Industry for its supply : And, however Christians may find fair

Pretexts

Pretexts to disguise their Sloth and Neglect, yet when they shall see those, set over them, shut out from Happiness for their Omission, what hopes will they then have of a Reward, who have thus neglected themselves, having been ever sollicitous to call for help in their Corporal Distress, without seeking Remedy for their Spiritual?

Deliver us, O Lord, from this Stupidity, and quicken all thy Servants with a new Zeal, that they may all, in their several Degrees, discharge their respective Duties. That such, as have any kind of Superiority, may be every way just to their Charge; and such, as are Inferiors, may in no ways be wanting to themselves: Thus will thy Mystical Body be well-pleasing to Thee on Earth, and be prepared for a greater Perfection in Heaven.

Saturday,

Saturday, Third Week in Lent.

LESSON.

Dan. C. 14. V. 1. ends V. 62.

Daniel cried with a loud Voice, *I have no hand in the Blood of Susanna: Are you so senseless, O Israelites, that without Examination, or Knowledge of the Truth, you have condemn'd a Daughter of Israel?* Return again to Judgment. They are like to keep but an ill Lent, who being careful in Fasting, have at the same time a hand in their Neighbour's Blood: And tho' it is to be hoped there are but very few so unfortunately miserable, as to fall under this guilt; yet when we reflect, there's a murthering People in their Reputation and good Name, as well as in their Persons, then we have reason to turn to the other extreme, and fear there are very few, that are Innocent: Very few, who with Daniel can cry out, *I have no hand in my Neighbour's Blood.* For certainly, tho' the greatest Number of Christians are so tender-hearted, as to have a Horror of the very Thoughts of shedding Blood, yet this other way of murthering is

is grown so very familiar, that it is the Matter of ordinary Entertainments, and daily Subject of Diversion ; so that whenever we come unexpected into Company, and surprize them in their Mirth, 'tis great odds but upon Examination you'll find they are ripping up their Neighbour's Sores, widening his Wounds, and have truly their Hands in his Blood. And the Misery is, they are at the same time unnaturally murthering themselves too, since there's nothing brings more certain Death on a Soul, than thus offending against Charity, which is the Bond of Perfection, and Principle of Christian Life : And in this double Murther consists the greatest Part of Christian Entertainment and Mirth.

And I believe, whoever will take the Pains to look into the Particulars of these diverting Discourses, will discover this great aggravation of *Injustice* generally accompanying their *Uncharitableness*, that, as in *Susanna's Case*, 'tis without *Examination, or Knowledge of the Truth*, they condemn whomever they condemn. 'Tis true, if we observe the common Method of the Relations they make, 'tis with that Positiveness and great Assurance of Truth, that one would imagine they were all Eye-witnesses of what

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what they report; when a little Enquiry will soon lay open this Truth, that indeed they have no certainty of what they say; but it all comes to *Such an one says so*, and *I was told so*; which at the best are nothing but *Second* and *Third-hand* Truths, which are so notoriously alter'd, and disfigur'd, that if by good luck they come again to the first Reporter, he has Difficulty enough, under so many Disguises, to find them to be his own. So that in reality the greatest part of what we thus hear, however with the Face of Truth, are certainly no better than wilful or affected Mistakes, weak Surmises, biassed Constructions; and, without any sort of rash Judgment, one may conclude upon the first hearing, 'tis ten to one they are false. And therefore I cannot but look on them either as little Friends of Truth, or very dull Observers of the common Defects of Narratives, who dare either *Believe* or *Report*, with any sort of Confidence, whatever it be they hear in this kind. *I hear it*, is the utmost they can say: But if they go on, and assert it *to be so*, 'tis not without evident danger of an Untruth.

Every one, tho' of mean Capacity, is sensible how little Grace there is in making an *uncertain* or *doubtful* Relation:

And

And if the *Account of Fact* be lame, as to some *Circumstances*, they know it will come short of what they intend, in diverting or gratifying the Company. This Reflection is a Temptation too strong to be resisted by the greatest part of Christians; and therefore, rather than any thing shall be wanting to their Story, they chuse to have the Weakness in themselves, and so making bold with Truth, they make such advantageous Additions to their Relation, that it may every way appear compleat. Hence it is we have Reason to suspect the greatest part of what we hear, to have something of Romance in it; for as in this there is generally some ground of true History, yet so set forth, especially the Hero, with so many Colours laid on, that if a Man be not well inform'd beforehand, he shall certainly be possessed with very false Notions: So here the Weakness of Man is such, that every Story, he relates, is but too commonly what he makes his Hero, and, I fear, the Itch of laying on Colours puts him upon setting it forth with some advantageous Disguise. The Experience of this general Infirmitiy is sufficient to oblige us to suspend all Judgment at least, if not to distrust the Exactness of what we hear;

hear ; and not join with those, who are bold in what they assert concerning their Neighbour.

Then if we consider how easy most People are in *mistaking* and making *wrong Application* of what they hear and see, nay, of relating their *own Inferences and Constructions* for the *Fact* itself, 'tis again what is sufficient to encrease this our Distrust. This is a Misfortune or Oversight even of good and well-meaning People ; we see it in the Apostles themselves, *John c. 21.* Christ had but said to *Peter* concerning *John*, *Thus I will have him continue till I come* : When presently a Report was spread amongst the Brethren that *John was not to die*, when Christ said no such thing, but only, *Thus I will have him continue till I come* : now if these good Men were thus unwary as to report this *Construction of their own* for the *Truth*, and make it so very different from what was spoken or intended by Christ, what is to be expected from others, who being inferior to them in all *Christian Qualifications*, are not so very cautious or scrupulous as they ought ; No question but we often hear their own Inferences and Applications instead of the *Truth* ; and how unlike, or even contrary, these are to it, depends only on their unprejudiced Sense and Ingenuity.

Thus

Thus from these general Heads, besides many others, we may conclude the great Uncertainty of ordinary Reports: And that on such weak Evidences it must be a notorious Rashness and Injustice to pronounce Sentence in so considerable a Matter, as is the Reputation of our Neighbour: And there's no doubt, as often as any, on these Grounds, proceed to Condemnation; if a *Daniel* were present, he would reproach them, as above; *Why are you so senseless, that without Examination, or Knowledge of the Truth, you have condemn'd a Child of Israel? Return again to Judgment.* Return again, for all these Causes require a rehearing; and without this we cannot easily avoid having a Hand in our Neighbour's Blood.

Deliver me, O Lord, from this Injustice; and for as many as I have hitherto wrong'd in this kind, I beseech Thee, O God, in thy Mercy, abundantly to recompence the Injury I have done. I pray for them now, and this Satisfaction I will make them, to pray for them as long as I live. And for the future so strengthen me, I beseech Thee, by thy Grace, that I may govern my Tongue and my Ears, that I may never have any part in defaming my Neighbour, but may ever reprove and dis- courage

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courage those, who practise it ; for thus only can that Blood be wash'd off, in which I have so often dipped my Hands.

Fourth Sunday in Lent.

E P I S T L E.

Gal. C. 4. V. 22. ends V. 31.

BRethren, we are not Children of the Servant, but of the Free-women, by the Liberty, with which Christ has made us free. In this Epistle St. Paul lays before us the great Advantage of Christians above those of the Old Law ; shewing the Jews to be a carnal and worldly People, animated with a slavish Spirit, and figured by the Seed of Agar, Abraham's Servant ; whilst the Christians he proves to be the true Children of God, Heirs of Eternal Life, and bless'd with that Liberty where-with Christ has made them free ; and therefore figured in the Seed of Sarah, a Free-woman, Abraham's Wife. This then is the Character given by St. Paul of a true Christian : That he is one, who enjoys a certain Liberty of Spirit, by which being freed, through Christ, from all the

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sinful Bonds of the Flesh and the World, he is united to God, as to his Father ; he loves him with the Tenderness of a Child ; he runs to him with the Confidence of a Child ; he regards him as his Sovereign Good ; prefers him before all Things ; consecrates to him his whole Life ; and all this as spurred on by the true Spirit of Christ. These are certainly very great Advantages of a Christian, and a great Blessing to those happy ones, who taste their Sweetness, and experience them within their Souls. But then, on the other side, are they not the subject of as great Terror and Confusion to all those, who discover none of these Marks of true Liberty ? since hence they have too much Ground to conclude, that, however, in their Baptism, they have been entitled to the Freedom of the Adopted Children of God ; yet they are so miserable as to live in Slavery, and deserve no other Place, than to be rank'd with the Jews, as being truly no other than the Jews of the New Law. And God knows how great the Number of these are.

Amongst these we must certainly reckon all those, who are Slaves to any Vice or Passion, who live in habitual Sin, and think so little of breaking their Chains, that they esteem themselves well as they are,

and

and seek not heartily for such Means, by which they may hope to be set at Liberty. Then let those consider how near they approach to this unhappy State, who, having their Hearts wholly possess'd with the Busines with this World, have their Thoughts so quite swallow'd up in this Sollicitude and Concern, that they are not so much as touched with the Concern of their Souls. Let those too consider it, who being eager and lively about every thing else, look coldly on every thing that belongs to God; and take but very little or no Pains in such Affairs, whereon their Salvation depends. Let those again consider it, who make such an unequal Distribution of their Time and Employment, as to give almost all to the World, and almost nothing to God: Who, when they are to spend one quarter of an Hour in Prayer, are so uneasy, that they seem to surfeit; but when they are called to Creatures and their Diversions, are then in true Satisfaction, and even Transports of Joy. Lastly, Let all those consider this Point, who live according to the ordinary Method of the World, subject to the common Failings and Passions of Men, going on in a customary Track of seeming Devotion, but without a serious Application to any Means, by which they

may gain upon themselves in the Reformation of their Lives: Let these consider it, I say, and see whether they can reckon themselves in the Number of those, who are moved by the Spirit of Christ, and delivered from the Slavery of their Passions; if they can, it must be by supposing the Spirit of Christ to abide within them barren, without Fruit or Action, and leaving them insensible of the Misery of their Condition, which is indeed quite contrary to that Idea the Scripture gives of it, and more resembles a State of Death, than the Spirit of Life.

'Tis true, it cannot be pretended there are any in this World enjoying that perfect Liberty, so as to be exempt from that general Slavery, which belongs to all, as we are born in Sin. As many as come into this World are born, as it were, in a Prison, whence there is no Delivery, but by Death; as long as we are in it, we are expos'd to infinite Difficulties, continual Troubles and Necessities: We are drag'd on every Day towards Death, like Criminals carried to Execution, without any Power of resisting: We are subject to the Corruption of the Body; we have not our very Souls at Command; but our Spirit is very often possess'd, even against our Wills, with a thousand impious and wicked

wicked Fancies, and our Wills distracted with as many Inclinations, which we cannot prevent. This is the Condition of all, as many as come into this World, whether Great or Little, Good or Bad ; but then with this Difference, that the Wicked and Imperfect Christians give up the Cause, so surrender themselves, and approve of this Slavery, that to them it becomes Voluntary, and of Choice, which before was only Natural and against their Wills ; and thus yield Obedience to all its Laws and Directions : The Good on the other side, confessing the Justice of this State, submit to it with Patience, as to all the Troubles and endless Contradictions of it : But then, as far as its Inclinations and Suggestions are contrary to the Law of God, they make War against it, and are so strictly on the Watch, that however it has gotten the Possession of Nature, yet they keep their Will in their own Power ; so that tho' they find it often furiously assaulted, yet they still stand on the defensive. If, by Chance or Surprize, they lose Ground, they still recover it again ; if any Breach be made, they still repair it : And thus weakening by degrees their Enemy, they enjoy a sort of Peace and Liberty, notwithstanding

all the Slavery : And this is that Liberty, with which Christ has made us free.

Tis the enlarging and perfecting this Liberty, is the Busines of this present Time of *Lent* ; whilst, by Fasting, Self-denials, Mortification, and using our best Endeavours, we are encouraged to lessen the Bonds of our Slavery and Corruption ; and, by Alms, Prayer, Reading, and other Devotions, to raise up our Minds to the earnest Desire of Peace, and so strengthen our Hearts against all Attempts of our Enemies, that we may come to the Liberty of the Children of God, and, by being his Children, be likewise the Heirs of his Kingdom. Grant us, O God of Power and Goodnes, this Liberty at present, that we may at length obtain this Inheritance.

*Fourth Sunday in Lent.***G O S P E L.**

John, C. 6. V. 1. ends V. 15.

Gather the Fragments, that are left, that they be not lost. The Subject of this Gospel is a Miracle wrought by Christ, in Feeding a great Multitude with Five Loaves

Loaves and Two Fishes : Upon which St. *Augustine* often remarks, that tho' this was a wonderful Effect of his Power, and a great Work ; yet it is not greater, than what he ordinarily does for the Subsistence and Nourishment of Men. For that, whether God at once multiplies, in his own Hands, a few Loaves, and makes them capable of satisfying so great a Multitude, or by the Earth in the ordinary Way multiplies the Seed for their Food, the Wonder, he says, is the same, and the Effect of the same Power ; and therefore, that Men judge not according to Reason, in being surprized at the one, and so little touched with the other ; as if God acted in the one, and not in the other : Whereas the Earth and Seed, and all other second Causes, are no otherwise fruitful, but by that Virtue and Disposition, which are from him, and can have no Effect, but as his Power moves in them, and his Goodness gives a Blessing.

But the worst is, by these mistaken Judgments, they proportion their Gratitude ; they have a Sense of miraculous Succours, but reflect not upon what comes the ordinary Way. But Reason and Piety ought to correct these Mistakes, and convince Christians, that they have not less Obligations to God, for the Helps they

receive by the ordinary Course of second Causes, than if he wrought for them every Day a Miracle: And therefore, that for these, they are not to be wanting in the sincere Expressions of a daily Gratitude.

The Practice of this ought to be, *First*, in giving Thanks with the Lips, in the actual Use of every thing, after the Example of Christ, who first gave Thanks, before he distributed the Bread: Those, who have every thing for calling for it, have reason to bless the Giver; and a grateful Sense may be quicken'd in them, by considering how many want what they enjoy in Plenty; and that 'tis not their Merit, but Providence only, that makes the Distinction. *Secondly*, In employing what they have received from God, to answer the Necessities of themselves or Family, after Christ's Example, who, multiplying the Bread, to serve their Wants, who had then joined themselves to him, has in this taught all others, what ought to be the principal Use of whatever Part they have in the Dispensations of his ordinary Providence; and condemns their unnatural Injustice, who prostitute the greatest Part of what they possess by the Divine Bounty, to their own Extravagance or Vice, and rob their Family of what is necessary



necessary for their Support, or for the due Education of their Children.

Thirdly, By gathering up the Fragments, that they be not lost, but may serve for the Help of the Poor. This ought to be practised by watchful Endeavours for preventing all Waste; *First*, In Servants, who, being left without Inspection, are seldom so good Managers as they ought to be, but either carelessly or prodigally throw away what might be spared for a better Use. If this be done, in disposing of what is not their own, they are to answer for the Injustice; and if an ill Custom carries them on without Reflection, tho' the Fault may not be so great, yet those, who are over them, are not excusable in either Case, since their Eye ought to prevent all such ill Management; and there must be a sinful Imprudence in such a blind Trust, which gives the Opportunity to Injustice or Waste.

Secondly, It is to be practised by all Christians, in regard of themselves, and of whatever they call their own; that is, they are to manage with such good Husbandry, as having supplied all Necessities, to gather up the Fragments for the Poor. Christ working a Miracle for their Relief, and ordering what was left to be laid up, has taught Christians how industrious

they are to be, in providing Succours for those that want. There are few so straiten'd in Fortune, but, by good Management, they might have Fragments to gather, for the Help of others in Distress, if, providing for Necessity only, they would bar all Expences of Pride and Intemperance. But if the Demands are to be satisfy'd of these devouring Passions ; if the Desire of appearing in a Dress above their Equals, or the Envy of others Vanity, or complying with Company, or indulging an Appetite, has the Command of their Purses ; what Wonder is it, if they have no Fragments to gather ? They may persuade themselves, that they let none be lost : But if Christian Frugality were to make up their Accounts, how much would be set down for Waste, in the Expence of what might have been spared ?

If this Waste be found amongst the Poor, or those, at least, of the lower Rank, what is to be expected from others of a more plentiful Fortune ? They will easily agree to this Maxim of the Gospel, That what is superfluous to them, ought to be esteemed as Fragments for the Stock of the Poor. But it being not so easily agreed what is superfluous, these Fragments seldom appear. And who shall here make a peremptory Decision ? 'Tis certain,

tain, if nothing is to be judged superfluous, but what can be spared by Pride, Ambition, State, Appetite, Inclination, and Idleness, there will be little set down under this Head; because these being unreasonable Passions, they are never satisfied by being fed, but ever grow, in proportion to the Favour that is shew'd them: What then can be superfluous when that is Judge, which, being unsatiable, is ever in want, and ever desiring more? If Custom and reputed Decency are to be consulted, we shall be still at the same Loss; because Pride, Gluttony, and Extravagance, are so twisted in with all the Expences of human Life, that to be judged by Custom and Decency, is to leave the Decision to Passion; these being nothing but Vice, under better Names. If the Lives of Christians were regulated by the Spirit of the Gospel, then common Practice and Example would be warrantable Guides; but if these are taken up for Rules, with all the Corruption that attends them, those that follow, must necessarily be led out of the Way.

What then is to be done amidst so many Dangers of Mistake? The Case admits of Latitude, and there is no setting up Bounds, beyond which, all Expence is a robbing of the Poor. The Thing must there-

therefore be left to Prudence, directed by Reason and Faith. Where this has a Command, a sincere Eye will see so much of Prodigality and Pride, in what is called Decency, as to cut off a great deal, without running into the other Extreme of a remarkable Singularity. It will examine the Table, Furniture, Attire, Divertisements, and every-where make Retrenchments, and not let a prevailing, but vicious Practice, so far gain upon the Gospel, as to shelter all manner of Extravagance under the softer Name of Custom. Here human Respects will put in *Caveats*; but what are the Censures of Men to a Spirit, that makes towards Heaven, and knows, that to please the World is going out of the Way? By this Method, many Fragments will soon be found, where others see nothing to be spared; and thus will a Treasure be laid up in Heaven by the Hands of the Poor, when Christians of the Mode are wasting this Stock, in courting those Inclinations, which the Gospel obliges them to renounce.

Christians, we are now in a Time when the Church calls you to make some Recompence for past Disorders, and God having sufficiently manifested, how available Charity to the Poor is for this End, you here see, whence they may be supplied.

plied. Provide for Necessaries, and a moderate Decency ; but spare from Pride, spare from Appetite, Humour, Intemperance, and State ; give to the Poor, what these would devour : Feeding the Hungry, Cloathing the Naked, Relieving Orphans, Widows and Prisoners, have the Promise of Blessings ; but feeding your own Corruption, is sacrificing God's Gifts to Self-love, to the World, and the Devil ; which is never allowable, and much less now. But 'tis thou, O Jesu, must teach Christians to gather up Fragments : Press then thy Commands upon them, I beseech thee, and let these prevail against the Torrent of Custom and the World : Give them Grace to see all the Waste they make, by the Flatteries of disguised Corruption and Self-love ; and let this be follow'd with a Horror of making themselves Eternally Miserable by that, which, if better employ'd, might be the Purchase of Heaven.

Monday,

Monday, Fourth Week in Lent.

L E S S O N.

3 Kings, C. 3. V. 16. to the end.

THE other Woman said, *Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it.* Thus said the Woman disputing with her Companion, before *Solomon*, concerning the live Child, and by this *Solomon* judg'd her not to be the Mother of it. As long as we are here in this World, we feel great Struggles and Disputes within us, and variety of Claims made to our Souls. Almighty God makes his Demands on one side, and produces sufficient Titles to shew we belong to him, and the Claim he lays, is to all ; *Fili, præbe mihi Cor tuum,* Give me thy Heart : Thou shalt love me with all thy Heart, with all thy Soul, with all thy Strength, and with all thy Mind. And there are some so happily assisted by his Grace, that indeed they give all to him, serving him with all their Power, letting his Will be equally their Guide in all they do, and their Satisfaction in all they suffer : The complying with their Duty their is great Concern : If they meet with

with Opposition, they resist what is Evil, and submit with Patience to whatever is not in their Power to remedy; they use the World and Creatures as far as Necessity obliges, but are ever watchful to avoid all those Abuses, which Vanity, Curiosity, or the love of Pleasure suggests: Thus, instead of serving themselves, they with all Sincerity serve God, and are ever doing the Business of their Father in Heaven. 'Twas this *David* pray'd for, when he cry'd out, *Fiat cor meum immaculatum*, let my Heart be pure, and wholly thine, O Lord, without Mixture, that so I may never be confounded.

The Devil however, on the other side, makes his Claim too; and 'tis to all; earnestly solliciting, that as many Souls as are created, would entirely renounce all Obedience to the Law of God, and submit to him. *Mitte te deorsum, Cast thyself down*, is what he says to all: And there are too many so unfortunately miserable, as to surrender themselves, by acknowledging no Ties on them, either of Religion or Conscience, but letting the Irregularity of their corrupt Desires be the Rule of all they do; and thus they become wholly his. But however, if he cannot obtain thus far, rather than

than give up his Right, he cries out, *Divide, let them be divided*; if they may not be entirely mine, let them be mine in Part: And thus evidently discovers how unjust his Claim is, being still contented, so he can but take us even this Way out of his Hands, who is truly our Father.

By this Artifice he makes his greatest Advantage amongst Christians at least; for 'tis to be hoped they are not so very numerous, who give themselves wholly up to a reprobate Sense: But as to those, who divide themselves betwixt God and the Devil, 'tis to be fear'd these are beyond all number. In this unhappy List is to be reckon'd that vast Body of Christians, who retaining a Sense, tho' very imperfect, of their Duty to God and their own Souls, say some Prayers at Home every Morning, and are often present at the Public Worship of the Church; but then as to the rest of the Day, give themselves that liberty, that whether it be by the Practice of Swearing, Curseing, Excessive Drinking, Gaming, and variety of other Licentiousness, they never fail to shew that the Devil has a part in them; so that if they pay their Homage daily to God by Prayer, they are as constant in making their Sacrifice to the Devil in their vicious

vicious Extravagancies. 'Tis by this Method the greatest Part of Christians miscarry; for however they keep up to a Form, and seem truly to acknowledge God, in offering him every Day some of their Thoughts, some of their Words, and it may be, some of their Actions; yet when is the Day, they make not the like Acknowledgment to the Devil, by yielding him Obedience, in following his Suggestions, and offending God in Thoughts, Words, and in Deeds? A like Division they make of their *Time*, of their *Care and Sollicitude*, of their *Money*, and whatever belongs to them, God coming in sometimes for a Share, and the Devil for a greater; for if they give some Alms, let them but reckon too how much is spent on *Vanity, Pride, Excesses, and to feed their Vices*, and 'twill soon appear on which side is the much greater Proportion; or rather, that there's no Proportion at all. Under this Head then come in as many, as live in any vicious Practice: And I fear a great number of those, who seem *Good Moral Men*, and are *Just* in giving to every one their due; for however Heaven has blessed them with a good Natural Temper, and upon the Principles of their Constitution, they are generally very Sincere, Friendly, Compassionate and Just; yet

yet inasmuch as there is wanting in them, that more solid Foundation of the *Love of God*, hence there arises a great mixture in their Lives ; and tho' it be not always apparent, yet, with all their Goodness and Justice to their Neighbour, there is commonly some great Injustice to God and their own Souls, in some affected Irregularity, by which the Devil holds his Right in them.

Hence it is, many others ought to be very apprehensive of themselves, who act on better Principles, that is, not of Nature, but of Duty and Religion : For however they may advance so far in a regular and exemplary Life, as to judge themselves and be reputed as truly belonging to God ; yet, if they unfortunately take the Liberty in any one Point, to transgress their Duty, not in any notorious or scandalous Crime, but even in judging rashly, or discoursing uncharitably of their Neighbour, this one habitual Sin makes an evident Division in their Souls ; and if, depending on their Religious Practices, they seem to hope that God has a share in them, they need not doubt, from one vicious Practice to conclude that the Devil has his too ; and then what is the unhappy Consequence of this, but that in reality they belong not to God at all ? for if a little *Leaven*, as

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St. Paul says, *corrupts the whole Lump, and no Man can serve two Masters,* 'tis plain, that even one indulg'd Sin that is Mortal wholly defiles the Soul; and he that in such Case pays Homage to the Devil, can truly pretend to no other Master. This seems a severe Doctrine; but however, upon due Consideration, I don't find any thing can be bated of it. And therefore 'tis what ought to set us on a very strict Watch; so that, however we may be subject to many Infirmities, yet we are still to be very careful never to give way to any one Mortal Offence, especially as to render it customary; for that by this means we are in a State of being for ever lost to our Heavenly Father, and become entirely his, who by Division pretends only to a small part, but truly gains the whole.

Deliver us, O God, from this fatal Error, and if we have been hitherto overseen, we now beseech Thee to have Mercy on us, and forgive all that is past. We here acknowledge Thee to be our Father, and desire to live thy Children, and for this End here beg thy Grace, that the Devil may have no Part in us: No, dear Lord, 'tis thou art our Father. And now in the Spirit of Children, we pronounce those sacred Words, *Our Father,*
who

212 *Tuesday, Fourth Week in Lent.*

*who art it Heaven : And desire, as often
as we shall repeat them, to renew our Fi-
delity to Thee.*

Tuesday, Fourth Week in Lent.

L E S S O N.

Exod. C. 32. V. 7. ends V. 14.

GOD said to Moses, Go down from the Mount, for thy People has sinned which thou brought'st out of Egypt, they have soon forsaken the way which thou shewed'st them. Pastors have a Charge from God of their Flock, and this must necessarily suffer, if they are wanting in their Duty. Happy are they who expose their People to no other Hazard, than while they take time, like *Moses*, to converse with God, and attend to their own Spiritual Affair. But then how many Woes will follow them, if deluded by the Spirit of the World, or of Sloth, or of Cowardise, they are prevail'd on to omit the greatest part of their Duty, and thus give Opportunity to their Flock of forsaking the ways of Justice? God will not say to them, *Go down, for your People have sinn'd*; but in the Spirit
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of Terror will demand an Account of all those Sins which have been the Consequence of their Neglect.

But however negligent Pastors will be thus called to a strict Account, yet will this be no Excuse to the People, so as to deliver them from the deserved Punishment justly due to their Sins: And therefore it ought to be their Care still to preserve their Innocence, and to conclude no Circumstances will be allow'd as a sufficient Justification, if they fall into any Crime. As the Condition of our Nation is, 'tis impossible for every one to have that Assistance from their Pastor, as their Circumstances might otherwise require. Some have not the Opportunity of seeing one in several Weeks; and hence they often want him for Instruction, for Direction, for a Comfort in Trouble, for a Help in Sicknes; nay, hence many die without him. But however 'tis most certain, whatever Sins they fall into, in this want of his Assistance, they highly provoke Heaven, as we see here in this Offence of the *Jews*, and a severe Account will be demanded of them.

How great then ought to be the Diligence of all such, who live in these unhappy Circumstances? First, in Masters of Families, to keep up a regular Discipline

pline amongst those under their Charge, to see that the *Duties of Sundays and Holy-days* be observed to the best of their power. And tho' they have not the Opportunity of assisting personally at the Public Worship of the Church on every Day of Obligation, yet never to fail of summoning their Family together on such Days, so as to hear Mass in Spirit at least (as St. *Francis Sales* advise) and performing all the Devotions of the Liturgy, which may be done with great benefit ; especially if they take care, they be first instructed how to do it : Then to meet again at a convenient Hour in the Afternoon, for the saying Even-song in private, or such other Prayers, as every one may find proper for himself. And here it will be very well their Devotions be concluded with some one reading a Chapter in a Spiritual Book aloud to the whole Company, and that this Exercise of reading afterwards in Private or Public, as Circumstances will permit, be earnestly recommended to them : A watchful Diligence being ever used for the banishing from their Families all those scandalous Exercises and Diversions, with which too many prophanè these Days.

Then for private Persons ; how regular ought they to be in all such Pious Exercises,

ercises, as are necessary for a Christian and Holy Life ? How careful in avoiding all Sin, as much as may be, and all Dangers of it ? And above all things, not to live in the Custom of any vicious Practice, such as renders them Enemies to God, and sets them at a distance from him ! For certainly, since they have not those Helps and Remedies at hand, that may be necessary for them, it ought to be their Business to secure themselves by a more than ordinary Diligence, and so to live, that if Death should surprize them, they might still hope in God's infinite Mercy, and not let the Absence of their Pastor be the Occasion of casting them into Despair.

But the Instruction of this Day's Lesson is not confin'd to People of these ill Circumstances, it belongs to others too ; for is it not generally the Misfortune of most Christians, too soon to forsake the Way, which God shews them ? How often happens it, that from what we read or hear, or from the Suggestion of some serious Thoughts, we are made truly sensible of our Failings, and shewn the Way we ought to walk in ? And tho' this be follow'd with something we call a Resolution, yet such is our Misery, as soon as some other Affairs make these better

Thoughts

Thoughts give place, just as if *Moses* had turn'd his Back, we presently return to our former Method, and forget the Way that was shewn us? The truth is, we easily approach so near our Duty, as to be pleased with the Prospect of a Virtuous Life; and the Taste of Holiness, we receive from the lively Impression of a good Book or Discourse, is grateful to us; and hence we are willing to hope we have advanced something towards that Perfection, Christianity recommends to us, when God knows we are many times at a great distance from it; for tho' it be a very good sign to be pleased with the Taste of what is good, as shewing the Soul to be well inclin'd, yet there's a very great difference between being pleased with the Thoughts of Good, and being really so; since those pleasing Apprehensions are often followed with Relapses into very great Failings, with considerable Neglects, Oversight and Rashness; which those take care to avoid, who labour to be Christians, not only when retired in their Closets, and in Thought, but likewise in their Lives and Actions.

These reflect, that those Thoughts of Virtue, with which Almighty God often visits them, will be no Advantage, except they

they come to have such an Influence as to direct their Actions, to be an effectual Means of reclaiming them from all that is irregular in them, and thus bring forth Fruit in their Lives. For this End they are not contented with those passing Thoughts of Good, which occur in Time of Reading or Praying, but often strive to recall the same over again in the Day ; they know they must be often repeated, before they can hope for any good Effect ; they are sensible of the Opposition Nature and ill Custom will make against them, and therefore endeavour to guard them with Diligence, Constancy, and a true Christian Sollicitude, and use all the Means their Director recommends to them : For otherwise what will it avail to have Good Thoughts, if, like the Good Seed on the Highway, they are neglected, and soon trampled under Foot by whatever comes next ? These cannot possibly bring forth Fruit ; they may be pleasing, but will certainly be barren ; and will no otherwise answer the Ends of Christianity, than the Seed on the Highway can satisfy the Expectation of the Husbandman. This Neglect is a principal Reason in too many, that their Amendment seldom goes beyond their own Thoughts ; because whatever promising Apprehensions they have, they

only serve to shew them the Way, but are too weak truly to lead them into it.

Great is our Misery in this Particular, and we can have no Remedy for it, but from thee, O God ! Help us then with thy powerful Grace in this our Distress, and so strengthen us in the Prosecution of all that is Good, that we may not only think of Holiness while we have our Books in our Hands ; but so carry on our Designs, that our Resolutions may appear in our Lives.

Wednesday, Fourth Week in Lent.

LESSON.

Isaiah, C. i. V. 16. ends V. 19.

THO' your Sins be as Scarlet, they shall become White as Snow ; tho' they be Red as Crimson, they shall be made White as Wooll. We being so far advanced in Lent, 'tis very reasonable we should now enter upon a Review of ourselves, and see whether we are so careful in the Observance of it, as to hope for that good Effect, the Church proposes to all such as keep it as they ought. The End we are to

to aim at, in the due Observance of this Holy Time, is the same God promises in this Day's Lesson ; to wit, the entire Pardon of all our Sins : So that however grievous they may have beeen, tho' as Red as Scarlet, yet now we are to hope to become pure and undefiled, and be made White as Snow. Is this the Way we are in ? Do we make such Use of this Time, as to have Reason to hope for this good Effect in our Souls ? 'Tis this we ought to enquire into at present, that so we may not, like the *Jews*, observe this solemn Fast in vain. For our Direction in this Point, Almighty God has here laid down two Conditions, absolutely necessary for the rendering our Fast effectual ; and without which he declares it will be wholly fruitless and barren. *Quiescite agere per-*
versè ; Discite benefacere. He includes them in these few Words, *Cease from doing Evil ; Learn to do good.* 'Tis on these Terms he promises, *Tho' our Sins be Red as Crimson, they shall be White as Wooll.*

What then, tho' we see many Fasters ; what tho' we see many frequenting the Sacraments ; do all these obtain the Promises ? No, no more of them, than perform the Conditions. Such as go on with Fasting, and carry on their Sins too,

cannot expect the Promises made to those, who *cease from doing Evil*. The Promise is conditional, and is truly nothing to them, who are not solicitous to perform what is required. Here then is the great Matter of Surprize, that while Pardon of our Sins is only offered us on these Terms, we pretend to labour and hope for it in this Holy Time; and yet so go on after the Old Way, that we shew our keeping of *Lent* only on our Tables, in the Distinction of our Diet, and not in the more than ordinary Regularity of our Lives. It were to be wish'd, we could make this Time more remarkable for the Change of ourselves, than for the Alteration of our Diet; and that it might be observable in us, tho' our Tables were never seen. I would not have our Adversaries be put to enquire, why we eat no Flesh? but rather, why this Man does not swear as usually? Why this other drinks not to Excess, as usually? Why this declines Gaming, or any other dangerous Company and Entertainments? Why this has cut off so much of his expensive Vanity? Why this is not so passionate or quarrelsome, as ordinarily? Why these discourse not so freely of their Neighbour, as usually? Why these throw not away their Money, with their accustom'd Prodigality?

Thus

Thus ought we all to make such Retrenchments at this Time, in all those Disorders we observe in ourselves ; as to give sufficient Grounds of Wonder to as many as know us, and evidently convince them of it being *Lent*, without consulting our Tables, but only by the Change of our Lives.

'Tis on these Conditions we may hope for a good Effect of our Fasting, and, by *ceasing to do Evil*, expect that Mercy God has promised.

But, however, we are still to take one Step farther, and not only cease to do Evil, but *learn to do Good* ; and the Good here expressly mention'd is in regard of our Neighbour ; to love Justice, to succour the Opprested, to be just to the Orphan, to defend the Widow. Our daily Failings, and common Miscarriages of our Soul, are generally in regard of our Neighbour ; and if we seriously think of making our Peace with God, it must be by giving evident Proof of our Amendment in those very Particulars, where we acknowledge our Sins have been : And therefore there being nothing but Charity, that can satisfy for our former want of Charity, it ought to be our present Business to labour for an eminent Degree of this. Now 'tis most evident, this Charity or Love of our Neigh-

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bour is not an idle or unactive Virtue, which can lie still in our Soul ; but if it be there, it certainly puts it upon Action, and on all Occasions ever moves the Will to procure our Neighbour's Good, and carefully avoid whatever may do him any kind of Prejudice ; so that if ever the Cause of our injured Neighbour, of the Orphan, or Widow, be brought before us, it obliges us to be their Advocates, and espouse their Interest. And tho' Christians may protest within themselves they would certainly do so, if ever it were in their Power to do them this Right, I say, they have this often in their Power : For as often as they have the Cause of any *Absent* before them, whose Reputation is either question'd or condemn'd, so often have they the Cause of the *Orphan* and *Widow*, the *Absent* being, like them, truly in Distress : And if they then join with the Company in laying more Weight on the Oppressed, and by their concurring Votes help to ruin their Cause, they then take Part with the Multitude, without regard to *Justice*, and most certainly act against *Charity*, which, as St. Paul says, *thinks no Evil*, much less *speaks it Evil* of any. And this, whatever the Ingratitude or Wickedness of Men may be ; for since their State is not yet unchangeable,

changeable, but they are still capable of becoming the Children of God ; since they have the Church and Sacraments open to them ; since they have the Bowels of God's infinite Mercy ready to receive them ; what Pretext can we have to exclude them from our Charity, and not rather express towards them the greatest Tenderness possible, as being Objects that truly deserve the greatest Compassion ? And therefore, whenever we go about, upon the Pretext of their Malice or Ingratitude, to think ourselves under no Obligation of shewing any Charity to them, I cannot but fear, at the same time we find Arguments to exclude ourselves from the Mercy of God ; since our Ingratitude and Wickedness, in regard of him, surpasses all that elsewhere can possibly be imagined. If then our Charity reaches not beyond Desert, with what Face of Confidence can we pretend to ask or expect it from Almighty God ?

Let us therefore, in Consideration of our own Interest, extend our Charity to all : Let us thus endeavour to do the Good God requires of us ; that so, by fulfilling the Conditions, our Fasts may be acceptable, and we obtain that Pardon we so much stand in need of. And thou, O

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God of infinite Charity, help us in this our Duty ; for tho' it be comprised in a few Words, of *ceasing to do Evil*, and *learning to do Good* ; yet it is a great Work, and we confess of ourselves, we shall certainly fail in the Performance : Pour forth therefore, we beseech thee, thy Grace into our Souls, and enable us to fulfill all thy Commands ; and then, Lord, command what thou wilt.

Thursday, Fourth Week in Lent.

L E S S O N.

4 Kings, C. 4. V. 25. ends V. 38.

ELISHA said to his Servant, Take my Staff and go : If thou meetest any one, salute him not ; and if any salutes thee, answer him not, and put my Staff on the Child's Face. This was the Command of the Prophet to his Servant when he sent him to raise the Shunamite's Son to Life. This same is the Busines we generally have on our Hands, to give Life to our Souls, and deliver them from that Death, which Sin brings on us ; and, not to mis-
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carry in this Work, we cannot do better than carefully observe the Prophet's Directions. There are great Numbers, who, touch'd with the Light of God's Grace, have a clear Sight of that Darkness, in which they lie; and, as Men inspired, seem resolved to rescue themselves from that Slavery and Death, which oppresses them; when, not regarding the Prophet's Prescriptions, they salute those they meet, and intending nothing more than to be civil to their old Acquaintance, are by them discouraged from their pious Undertaking, and even laugh'd into their former Engagements of Sin. One would think *to be Civil* is a Qualification not at all unbecoming a Christian; and yet the greatest Part of the World is so corrupt, and those Customs, now received and practised even by Persons of Reputation, have so much of Danger, if not of Evil, mixed with them, or at least entailed on them, that whoever is resolute in following the Maxims and Rules of the Gospel, is under an Obligation of being Rude; and must necessarily break received Practices in so many Occurrences, that he cannot well escape the Censure of being Uncivil.

See but the Ways of the World: There is so much of downright Vice and Wicked-

ness in the ordinary Course of great Numbers called Christians, that 'tis plain their Friendship is an Enemy to God; and whoever salutes these, so as to comply with them, and be Civil, as they term it, must necessarily shake Hands with the Commandments, with Conscience, and the Practice of Religion.

And for such as are some Degrees before these, I mean that considerable Number of Catholicks who pretend to Religion, who observe some Order as to their Prayers and Devotion, and seem to renounce whatever is evidently sinful and scandalous; I say, as to these, *Salute them not*: For they have so widen'd the narrow Way, and made the Life of a Christian to be a Life of so much Divertisement, of so much Liberty, Vanity, Curiosity, and Prodigality, that the Gospel-Spirit is quite out of Fashion with them; and they know not what Self-denial, what Mortification, what taking up the Cross, what forsaking the World, or the true Spirit of Penance is. And if, in thy Way of recovering thy Soul from Sin, thou happenest to salute and strike in with these, thou art in evident Danger of never coming to that Life thou seekest; thou wilt be drawn into a Life of Ease, and, if thou engagest not in open Sin, thou

thou wilt at least be in Love with the Occasions of it ; be fond of what is dangerous, and be content to live on the Brink of a Precipice, but certainly at a great distance from that Way, which the Gospel shews and recommends, the Way that leads to Life.

There are others, in a Rank before these, who are more cautious and reserved, who have cut off most of the Extravagancies of Youth, and are Exemplary among their Neighbours ; and yet if thou meetest these, *Salute them not*, nor think all that to be Holy, or even Allowable, which thou beholdest in them ; for even these have corrupted their Ways ; they take so much Liberty in their discoursing, are so easy in making their Passions reasonable and just, are so free in judging, so little concerned in their unnecessary Expences both of Time and Money, are so indecently hasty in their Devotions, so remiss in their Fasting, so little recollected and prepared in frequenting the Sacraments, with Variety of such other Failings, that, if thou joineſt with them, thou art in Danger of being stopped in thy Way ; thou must pass them by, and not let the Authority of reputed good People prevail with thee, to think thyſelf ſafe and well in every thing

thing thou seest practised by them. Whilst then thou art upon the Prophet's Message, in seeking Life for thy Soul, follow the Prophet's Directions; if thou meetest any, *salute them not; and if any salute thee, answer them not.*

But what, are Christians then so depraved, that there are none fit for a poor Penitent to join with in his Way to Life? Truly 'tis no Rashness to conclude the Lives of most Christians to be very imperfect and corrupt: And he that has told me, there *are many called, but few chosen*, assures me, there are but few qualified for this, and who these few are God only knows. They are therefore certainly in great Danger of being misled, who rest satisfied under a quiet Mind; forasmuch as there is nothing they do, but they have the Example of other very sober and pious Christians to authorize and justify what they do. These say for themselves, *Such an one does this, such another does that*, who are Persons of Principles and Conscience: And this would be a good Defence, could they add too, *that they are certain these Persons never do any thing amiss.* But, alas! it being most certain that these very Persons do many Things, of which they afterwards repent, and for which they reprove themselves,

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it must necessarily be unsafe to follow them ; and their Authority may be the Means of leading others into many Imperfections. And I don't question, 'tis on these Grounds of *Example* and *Custom* that Numbers of undiscerning Souls are carried out of the Way.

What then are Christians to do, who desire to avoid this ill Conduct ? They must take the Prophet's Staff in their Hands, that is, take the Advice of some discreet Director, and having learn'd from him the safe and narrow Way, and inform'd themselves from Scripture or other good Books what the Spirit of Christ is, what true Penance is, how dangerous is a Life of Idleness and Ease, how many dangerous Practices are authoriz'd by Example and Custom, &c. then be careful to walk on by the help of this Staff, and to salute none by the Way, so as to be perswaded by their Authority to decline either to the Right or to the Left ; and thus shall they find Life for their Souls. Help us, O Lord, in this our Way, and so strengthen our Hearts by thy Grace, that no Power or Persuasion may ever carry us out of the Path of thy Commandments, or prevail on us to embrace any thing, that is not safe for our Souls,

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Souls, and most agreeable to thy Holy Spirit. Amen.

Friday, Fourth Week in Lent.

LESSON.

3 Kings C. 17. V. 17. to the end.

THE Woman's Son being dead, *She said to Elias, What have I to do with thee, thou Man of God? Art thou come to me to call my Sins to Remembrance, and kill my Son?* The Occasion of this Complaint was not that this Woman repented of the Charity, she had shewn to the Prophet, in entertaining and feeding him; but she began to fear she had not treated this Servant of God with that Respect as she ought, and that this her Unworthiness had provok'd Almighty God to punish her former Sins in the Death of her Son; so that they are Words not of an angry, but an humble Mind. And tho' she was mistaken in this her Construction, since her Child was not taken away to punish her, but that God might be glorified in his Prophet by restoring him to Life; yet this her Apprehension is an Instruction

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to us, how careful we ought to be treating holy things holily, and with great Respect, and that the Want of this is a ready Means of drawing God's Judgments on our Heads.

We, that are Christians, have the Treasure of God's infinite Mercies pour'd forth upon us ; we are above all others encompassed on every side with Blessings. And as the being thus privileg'd with the extraordinary Effects of the Divine Goodness, exacts from us the greatest Tribute of Thanksgiving, Adoration and Praise, so without question, there is nothing more exasperates the Sins of Christians, and renders them more provoking, than an Insensibility, Ingratitude, and want of Respect under these wonderful Favours of the Divine Bounty ; and if at any time they experience the weight of God's Anger on them, they need not look for any further Reason. And hence it is, I cannot but fear, that, however we have infinite Helps appointed us by Almighty God, the Abuse of these very Helps will be the Condemnation of great numbers of Christians.

'Tis a great Blessing God has ordain'd for our good in the Sacrifice of the Altar, whereby he has provided us a Means of obtaining all necessary Graces, by laying

ing before the Father the Infinite Merits of his Son's Passion. Now here being offer'd the Lamb of God himself, that is, he that is all Holiness, Purity and Perfection; how great Holiness and Sense of Respect does it require on our parts, to partake of the intended Blessings? And how easily may a want of that Holiness and Respect so justly due, turn all those Blessings into Curses, and make that be our Ruin, through our Faults, which by the Divine Goodness was design'd for our Salvation? How careful then ought all those to be, who are call'd to the Altar, to let a becoming Gravity, a profound Reverence, a true, sincere Devotion, accompany all they do, and never to let Custom diminish in them the Sense of their Obligation? *If it be Holy what they do every Day, it ought every Day to be done Holily, nay, every Day more Holily than other, since every Day is the addition of a new Favour: And if it be Christ himself they offer every Day, it ought still to be perform'd with a Humility, with a Respect due to so divine a Function: And if this be wanting; if, instead of Gravity, there be an indecent Hurry; if, instead of Reverence, there be a want of Sense; if, instead of Devotion, there be the careless way of performing a Task, I can't tell how favourably such may*

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make up their own Accounts, but I apprehend this to be very highly provoking to him, who knows the true Value of his own Blessings, and rigorously exacts from us a return of a lasting Sense, Gratitude and Devotion, suitable and proportion'd to them.

A like Construction is to be made of them whose Part it is to assist at this Great Oblation ; for he that requir'd of Moses to pull off his Shoos, because the Ground whereon he stood was Holy, has sufficiently signified to us, that our Repeat and Devotion ought ever to be answerable to the Sanctity of the Place or Person, in whose Presence we are ; and therefore, tho' many who come to this Sacrifice of Christ's Infinite Love, and are present before the Lamb, but with Minds wholly distracted, without a Sense of what they are doing, with an indecent Behaviour either in gazing or talking, with Hearts full of Vanity, or any ways encouraging or engag'd in Sin, may falsly perswade themselves they are acceptably discharging a Duty ; yet I think they have more reason to fear the dreadful Effects of God's Anger, who thus presume to approach the Holy of Holies with polluted, or at least unprepared and worldly Souls : For certainly he, that requires a great Sanctity on our Parts for the worthily receiving all his Bleſ-

Blessings, must necessarily be exasperated with our Neglect and Ingratitude, when being invited, as his Children and Christians, to the most Excellent of all his Mercies, we come indeed but with the insensibility of Statues, with the levity of Worldlings, or wickedness of Devils. And if this can be so colour'd, as to be esteemed the performing what is due, then I think the Spirit of Christianity is lost, and there is nothing left but the outward Frame of a Useless Carcass. This would be indeed a favourable Addition to our own Liberties, but a great Lessening to the Sanctity and Majesty of our God; but such, I hope, as will not enter into the Hearts of many Christians; who, upon reflection, must needs conclude, that God's severe Chastisements of the Jews heretofore, for their disrespect to the Ark, are a demonstration of the great Reverence and Sanctity, with which we are oblig'd to perform every Duty that belongs to him, and that otherwise we must unavoidably fall, like them, under the Rigour of his Justice.

Upon which Consideration, I could wish, as often as Christians approach before their God to pay him Homage, for Solemnizing any Festival, or partaking of any

any of the Sacraments, they would ever remember to prepare themselves with those interior Dispositions of Soul, which may render them true Honourers of the Lord, fit them for those Graces, he has design'd in all his Holy Institutions, and by this Means escape those Judgments, which follow all those, who unworthily appear before him. For certainly, as Old Simeon prophesied of Christ, that he was come for the *Ruin and Resurrection of many*, so it is with every thing, that belongs to Christ; they are not *things indifferent*, which can be without having any Effect: No, they must either help us, or hurt us, either save us, or condemn us. If we perform them as we ought, we shall receive a Blessing; but if we are wanting on our Parts, this involves so great an Abuse of God's Mercies, so great an Ingratitude, that it must necessarily bring to God's Remembrance all our Sins, and move him to a just Revenge.

Quicken us then, O Lord, with thy holy Spirit, that we may perform every thing, that belongs to Thee, with a Respect and Devotion truly becoming thee; that we may not, by our Insensibility, or Impiety, unhappily draw Poison to our Souls in the Abuse of thy Blessings, but serve

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serve Thee in Spirit and Truth, and thus receive the Advantage of all thy Mercies.

Saturday, Fourth Week in Lent.

LESSON.

Isaiah, C. 49. V. 8. ends V. 15.

SAY to those who are in Chains, go forth ; and to such as are in Darkness, see the Light. This whole Lesson is a Prophecy of Christ, foretelling that he should reconcile the World to God, gather those that were scattered, be the Guide of his People, deliver those in Chains, and bring Light to such as are in Darkness. And indeed so wonderful have been the Provisions of his Mercy, that there has been nothing wanting in him, for the filling up all those Characters, given him heretofore by the Prophets ; and yet, behold, notwithstanding all this, what great Numbers of Christians are there still lying under the Oppression of heavy Chains, still sitting in the Shades of Darkness, as if Christ had taken no Care, or done nothing for them ? And yet is it not evident,

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on the other Side, that all the Means of our Redemption are general, and whatever he has done or suffered for our Deliverance from Death and Darkness, has been in common for all ? The Misfortune then of all those, who are not sensible of any Effects of his Passion, must be charg'd on themselves, and not on him ; inasmuch as he having accomplish'd all on his Part necessary for their Salvation, they are wholly wanting in what he requires of them. He says to them, *Go fourth of your Chain*, and they obey him not : He says to them, *See the Light*, and they hear not his Voice. They vainly imagine, that after his Sufferings, they are to be saved *gratis*, or without any Trouble or Pains on their Side ; whereas his Passion, however necessary to satisfy the Divine Justice, was not at all intended to exempt or excuse us, but rather to serve us as an Example and Rule, how we ought ever to labour and suffer for the Purchase of Happiness, as his Disciples and Followers. *Christ suffer'd for us*, says St. Peter, leaving us an Example, that we may follow his Steps. The Life of a Christian then ought to be like that of Christ, laborious and painful, *si tamen compatimur ut & conglorificemur* ; and there can be no reasonable Hopes of Glory

Glory after a Life, which has not follow'd upon the Steps of his Sufferings.

For as many then as live at their Ease, waiting on the Inclinations of a corrupt Nature, and the great Business of whose Lives is to satisfy themselves in whatever delights, and not to punish themselves in those Self-denials, which are indispensably necessary for a Christian Conquest, nor take that Pains in those Exercises of praying, reading, &c. which are the proper Means of knowing what Virtue is, and improving in it; as for these, I say, what wonder is it, if they still lie under the Weight of Sin, and enslaved to many Passions; since Christ commanding them to *Go forth of their Chains*, they take no Pains to shake them off; and bidding them *See*, they will not turn themselves to the Light? These may complain indeed of human Weakness, but the true Grounds of their Misery is their Sloth, their Self-love, their fear of hurting themselves, and not being acquainted with that Gospel Principle, of denying their Sense and Passions those Satisfactions which are contrary to the Spirit of Christ: And hence living according to the Method of Unbelievers and Heathens, how should they expect the Fruits of Christ's Passion in their Souls, who know nothing

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of his Spirit, obey not his Voice, nor understand his Ways?

A like Construction is to be made of those half-paced Christians, who being free from the more scandalous Crimes, are however subject to many considerable Weaknesses, and to such Imperfections, as easily discover they have yet Chains on them, and partake not of the Liberty which Christ promised to his Followers, and the Reason is still the same with those before: For if these look but seriously into themselves, they'll soon see very great Defects on their Part; that either through Sloth they will not take the Pains necessary for the mastering their Failings, or for want of Self-denials, give Opportunity to their Passions to grow upon them; so that as far as they are off from that Perfection which Christ promises, so far they may generally conclude themselves to be wanting in using those Means, which Christ requires of them.

Generally, I say; for I cannot but hope there are some Christians, and those not few, who keeping a due Watch on themselves, carefully make use of all those Means to which they are advised as proper for them, and notwithstanding this Diligence, are still sensible of many Weaknesses,

nesses, which makes them apprehend God to be angry with them, while he seems not to give a Blessing to their Endeavours, and therefore, with *Sion*, in this Lesson, they are often ready to cry out, *Our Lord has forsaken us*: Whereas in reality he forsakes them not, but even while he seems to deny them, even then, is nearest to them, and gives them the greatest Blessings. 'Tis true, he favours them not in their own Way, nor shews himself on that Side, which they desire. These oftentimes led along by Inclination, tho' without any Suspicion of its being so, are very sollicitous to obtain the Gift of Prayer, and earnestly desire to raise up their Hearts to him in great Fervour, and an undisturbed Devotion; they would again serve him in Quiet and Peace, free from all uneasy Temptations, which often terrify their Souls, and almost cast them into Desjection and Darkness. And tho' they pray and labour earnestly to gain this Point, yet 'tis without gaining Ground, nay, often with the fear of losing it. But however Almighty God fails not to assist them still, and ever draws them nearer to himself; not leading them, as they desire, by the Way of *Prayer*, and a *Peaceable Devotion*; but carrying them on by a quite different, tho' much safer Way; that is,

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by the Way of *Patience*, of *Self-denials*, of *Suffering* and *Resisting Evil*, by *Longanimity*, *Humility* and *Perseverance*. So that, tho' they pray not with that Quiet and Fervour as desir'd, nor are so free from Imperfections and Evils as they wish; yet while they *Humble* themselves under the seeming Withdrawings of Grace, and hold out with *Patience* and *Courage* under all the malicious Buffets of Satan, this *Humility*, this *Patience* and *Constancy*, is more acceptable and advantageous to them, than all their Prayer and Peace would be; they being by this means preserved from all danger of interior Pride, Presumption and Opinion of themselves, which probably they might fall into, did they but advance a little in their own Way: Hence in that very Point, wherein they bewail themselves as not favour'd by the Blessing of Heaven, they experience the Effect of God's particular Mercy; and when they are tempted to cry out, *Our Lord has forgotten me*, then it is, our Lord makes answer, *Can a Mother forget the Child of her Womb, so as not to have compassion on him? And if she should, yet will I not forget thee.*

This is thy Goodness, O Lord, to poor Man, to be then heaping thy Blessings

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on him, when, not discerning the Secret of thy Ways, he apprehends thee to be at a distance from him. Grant me, I beseech Thee, an humble and resigned Heart, that with perfect Content I may ever acquiesce in all the Methods of thy Grace : And be so favourable to me, that, since thou hast so abundantly provided for my Salvation, I may be so quicken'd by thy Holy Spirit, as not to frustrate the Designs of thy Mercy by my Tepidity, Self-love, or Sloth. *Amen.*

Passion-Sunday.

E P I S T L E.

Heb. C. 9. V. 11. ends V. 15.

CHRI^ST being come, the High-Priest of Goods to come, has entered once into the Sanctuary, not by the Blood of Goats or Calves, but by his own Blood, having obtain'd an eternal Redemption for us. Having made some Preparation in our Souls, in the observance of these four Weeks of *Lent*, by Fasting and Prayer ; now from this Day the Church requires all her Children to turn their Thoughts to the Passion of our

our Lord, that so, with the Assurance of Christian Hope, they may look for the happy Fruits of their Labours, in being admitted to partake of the Merits of his Sufferings ; for this ought to be the End of their Endeavours in what ever Exercises they perform of Mortification or Prayer. And, to prevent all manner of Miscarriage in this important Affair, she lays before them in this Epistle, the Method by which Christ entered into the Sanctuary of Heaven, not by the Blood of Calves, but by his own Blood ; to instruct them, that if they effectually think of receiving the Benefit of his Passion, and one Day entring into his joyful Sanctuary, it must be by joining in his Sufferings, and so far following his Example, as to offer themselves a Sacrifice to God, and open a Way by giving their Lives and Blood to him.

'Tis true, as we are defil'd with Sin, we were incapable of becoming such a Sacrifice, because every Victim offer'd to God ought to be Pure, and without Blemish ; but however, this is now become possible to us through Jesus Christ, who offering his Life a Sacrifice of Expiation in our behalf, has even rendered us capable of making an Offering likewise of ours, by uniting it to his. The infinite Sanctity of his Victim makes ours accepta-

ble in the sight of God : So that, instead of exempting us from Suffering by the effusion of his Blood, he has rather by that found an Expedient to Sanctify our Sufferings, and render them agreeable to the Majesty and Goodness of God.

Not that all Christians are called to give up their Lives as Martyrs, or in Testimony of the Truth to shed their Blood ; but that all are oblig'd to offer their Lives a Sacrifice through Jesus Christ, and entirely to leave it in the Hands of God, as to the *Time* and *Manner*, in which he will please to accept it. 'Tis plain, the *Time* he has design'd for finishing this Offering, is That, when the Hour of Death comes, whether it be Natural or Violent, whether by a tedious and painful Distemper, or otherwise ; but in whatever manner it is to be, it is our general Duty to offer it as a Sacrifice to him, in Union with the Death of Christ. And hence it is a very commendable Practice of Christians, when they assist at the Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ at the Altar, at the same time to offer their Lives to God, for the time whenever he shall demand them, and in the manner he shall appoint ; and to beg Grace, that then they may effectually do this, when he shall put them in the necessity of doing it. By this means all
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the Members of Christ shall be conform'd to their Head, and not enter into Heaven, but as he did, by their Blood, that is, by offering their Lives a Sacrifice to God, in union with his.

But to do this well, they must prepare beforehand to give their Lives, by endeavouring every Day to live to him ; that is, so to make God the principle Object of their Heart and Love, as to admit of nothing, whether of Pleasure or Profit, to have Preference to him, but to be ever ready to renounce and lose all, even Life itself, rather than lose Him. And in this Sense every Christian is obliged to Martyrdom, inasmuch as every Christian ought to be prepar'd in Heart to hazard the Loss of all, rather than of God. And it is not only in this Sense, that all good Christians are Martyrs : But also, because they give their whole Life to God, by parts, in a daily Oblation ; and sacrifice their dearest Affections to him.

Now the Practice of this is often put into our Hands ; for the Law of Christ being directly opposite to all the Inclinations of our corrupt Nature, there is scarce any thing suggested to us to satisfy or please ourselves, but what ought, or may at least be renounced for him. How many things are we inclin'd to, which are

directly sinful ? How many more are there, which tho' not barely Criminal, are yet so very dangerous and prejudicial in their Consequences, so much indisposing our Hearts, distracting our Thoughts, dissipating our Minds, favouring our Passions, strengthning our ill Affections, and so unsitting us for the Love of God, taking Possession of our Souls, that 'tis very hard to reconcile them with the Service of God and our Duty ? So many there are of these together, whether truly Evil, or disposing to it, or at least Impediments to Virtue, that, when I consider them in relation to Christ, methinks I see that verified in him, which God foretold of *Izmael* : *His Hand shall be against all, and the Hands of all against him* : And I don't wonder at *Simeon's Prophecy*, wherein he says, Christ was set up, as it were, a *Mark which should be contradicted*. For since he came not only to perfect the Law, but likewise to make War against, contradict and overcome all the Passions and evil Inclinations of our corrupt Nature, 'tis no matter of Surprize to find him contradicted, who comes to overthrow whatever is perverse, strong and violent within us. But hence it is we have ever Occasions of giving our Lives a Sacrifice to him, there being not any one Inclination

of all these, whether sinful, disposing to it, or even indifferent, but as often as in denial of ourselves we resist them, so often we give so much of our Lives to him. And, Christians, how often ought this to be, who have generally our Thoughts, Desires and Satisfactions so strongly biased on the wrong side, that they are ever running out of the Way. The Occasions of this kind are so very frequent, that he can be no true Servant of God, who makes it not his Business, to stand against them : He can be no Disciple of Christ, who forsakes them not, and consequently there is no entering into Heaven but for those, who by a kind of Martyrdom give up their Lives to Christ. Grant us, O God, this interior Strength, that we be ever ready to forsake ourselves and all for Thee ; that we may give our Lives a Sacrifice to thy Name : For though of ourselves we be unworthy, yet we have a Confidence that whatever we offer, through the Merits and Passion of thy Only Son, will find Acceptance with Thee.

Passion-Sunday.

G O S P E L.

John C. 8. V. 46. to the end.

*W*HICH of you will accuse me of Sin? Christ made this Challenge to the Jews, and his being exempt from Sin, is one of the principal Characters, which distinguishes him from all others, that are purely Men. It were to be wished, all Pastors could say the same to their Flock; the Excellency of those Mysteries, of which they are Ministers, demands this Purity of them; and the Obligation they have of instructing the Flock, is another pressing Argument upon them. The Life is a stronger Perswasive than Words; and little Fruit can be expected from that Preaching, where the Example of the Preacher gives the Lie to his Doctrine. If he shews, by his Practice, that the things of this World are to be loved, what will he prevail, in perswading his Auditory to contemn them? Especially too, when the Laity, and even those, who are most indulgent to themselves, are ever subtly

subtly spiritual in regard of their Pastors, and let no Failing of theirs escape, without a Remark. This ought to make them watchful against the least Disorders, and oblige them to follow St. Paul's Advice, in not giving Occasion of Scandal to any, that their Ministry may be under no Blemish. But however, the Flock too ought to remember, how much 'tis their Interest to renounce this censorious Spirit, since by this they deprive themselves of the Fruit of their Pastor's Instructions, and thus in the end bear the Punishment of their own Censures. And may not they prevent all Surprize, if they see Pastors living with Men for the Good of Men, by this Commerce, contracting some of their Spirit ; and even hope, that the continual Charity, which they practise in the Exercise of their Ministry, may be sufficient to purify the Filth they gather ; according to what the Apostle says, that *Charity covers a multitude of Sins?* Nay, according to the Order of Providence, they may go farther, and by observing, that God has often permitted those in Authority, to take very false Steps, as in *David's Case*, in Punishment of the People's Sins ; may not they, in their Pastor's Faults, read their own Crimes ; and instead of reproaching them, turn

their Eyes upon themselves, and labour to reform those Evils, which have drawn this Judgment upon them.

This is some use, that may be made of Christ's Words, both by Pastors and People: But if we consider them, in regard of Christ himself, we may see them verified in a most particular Manner, his whole Life being regulated by Reason, Charity and Obedience, with a total Exclusion of all that was sinful or imperfect; so that the Love of Riches, Pleasure or Honours, had no place in him; all that he did, was with Reference to God's Glory, the Accomplishment of his Sacred Will, and the Redemption of Man. Hence his whole Time was divided betwixt Retirement and Labour, in relieving the Distressed, reclaiming the Vicious, and seeking the lost Sheep; and having thus spent his Life, he finished it in the same Spirit, by giving his Blood a Sacrifice for Sin. And who then can accuse him of Sin? No; blessed Jesus, thy greatest Enemies could never do this, with any Colour of Truth; and those Crimes, with which they tax'd thee at thy Death, were the Suggestions, only of their Malice, who thirsted after thy Blood. All the Sins, that weigh'd upon thee, were not thine, but ours; and these ought not

not to be thy Accusation, but our Reproach ; and the greater now, that having had in thy Life an Example of Virtue, which we profess to follow ; and seen in thy Death the rigorous Punishment of Sin, we still continue obstinate in Evil, as if we had neither Rule to direct, nor Justice to terrify us.

Christ then was without Sin, and upon the Spot he gives sufficient Proof of the Challenge here made, being unanswerable, when expressing his Charity to the Jews, and their Chief Priests, in teaching them to believe, he meets no better Return, than of Reproach, Infamy and Malice, in their calling him *Samaritan*, taxing him for having a Devil, and taking up Stones to throw at him. What greater Provocation could there possibly be than this, in having his Goodness thus ungratefully abused by their Malice ? And if there had been any Weakness in him, would it not here likely have appeared ? But what Effect had it upon him ? He does Right to Truth, in meekly answering the Calumny, and saying, he had no Devil ; and as for the Mischief designed against him, he only declines it, by peaceably going out of their way.

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This Humble Patience is a great Argument of his Sanctity, and that he could not be reproach'd of Sin ; and 'tis an Instance, which presses strongly upon us at this time, when being called by the Church, to the Memory of his Passion, 'tis expected we should celebrate it, not in Ceremony ; no, nor in Prayer only, and Thanksgiving, but in his Spirit ; that is, in the Spirit of Meekness, Patience and Humility. These ought to be the Characters of his Followers at all times, but more particularly now, when we are to live, as it were, in the Presence of Christ, under all his Sufferings, amidst the Cruelty of the Jews in *Pilate's Hall*, and on Mount *Calvary* ; and if Stubbornnes, and a proud Impatience, are ever unbecoming our Profession, certainly now they have such a Specifick Deformity, as to oblige us to an Abhorrence of such Disorders.

Ought it not then to be the present Busines of all Christians, to consider what are the ordinary Occasions, that make them uneasy, and provoke them to Passion or Impatience ; and then so to arm themselves against all, as to stand steadily under them, even according to the Copy of Christ, under the Rage of his Persecutors ? This ought to be their Posture,

Posture, in regard of all Evils of human Life ; but our present Gospel enjoins it more particularly, with respect to those Provocations, which are given us by the biting Tongues of others, moved either by Peevishness, Passion, or Malice ; and, because these frequently occur in the Commerce of human Life, therefore we are to be more solicitous in preparing against them.

I do not expect Christians should be insensible of such Provocations ; but that finding an interior Resentment, they should gain that Command of themselves, as not to break their own Peace by Impatience, nor their Neighbour's by engaging in a Quarrel. A meek Remonstrance, in Behalf of Justice and Truth, is very warrantable ; but when Persons, through Passion or Malice, are indisposed to hear, Silence is the most adviseable Method, or a peaceable Withdrawing ; that so, by giving Way to the Storm, it may not be improved by Resistance, but have the Opportunity of spending itself for want of fresh Matter, and by degrees settle into a Calm.

Patience and Discretion are necessary for the Practice of this Expedient : But where is our Christianity, if we do not come up to this ? Are we Disciples of our

our Master, if the Breath of our Neighbour is enough to overthrow us ? Are we rooted in Charity, if, upon such ordinary Provocations, we break all Peace ? Where is our Meekness ? where our Humility ? if we have no more of these but in Profession and Words ; and are only then humble and meek, when we have nothing to thwart us ; what does this come to, but Mockery and Deceit ? If we had a Master, that had only taught us by Words, and not practised what he taught, we might have some Colour to excuse this Weakness : But having both his Doctrine and Example under more rigorous Trials, than we are ever called to, we can do no less than condemn ourselves of being insincere in what we profess, and acknowledge we are no more his Disciples, than Pride and Impatience will give us Leave.

For what is there, but a secret Pride, at the Root of all Disturbance and Passion ; which, swelling at every thing that can be interpreted Contempt or Disrespect, causes Disquiet within, and Confusion without ? And is not this now a very commendable Quality, fitted for *Mount Calvary*, and suitable to our Suffering Lord ? We honour, we say, his Humility, and 'tis with Pride ; we honour his Silence, but with Contention ;

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we honour his Patience with Passion, his Meekness with Stubbornness, and his Charity with Contempt of our Neighbour, or Revenge. And are we thus to celebrate the Passion of our dying Lord, who was led like a Sheep to the Slaughter, without opening his Mouth? O God, deliver us from this practical Solecism in Religion; give us a better Spirit, that we may in earnest follow the Example of our Head: And thou, O Jesus, who art now our Advocate to the Father, plead in our Behalf; obtain for us such a Portion of thy Patience, Humility, and Meekness, that we may stand firm under all Trials, and not then forsake thee, when we are called to follow thee. Now, let us begin, and shew how much we honour thy Sufferings, by endeavouring to suffer like thee.

Monday, Passion-Week.

L E S S O N.

Jonah, C. 3. to the end.

THE People of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a Fast, and put on Sack-cloth from the greatest to the least. The Prophet

Prophet having published the Will of God, that within Forty Days their City should be destroy'd, you hear what immediately follows, *The People believed God, proclaimed a Fast, and put on Sackcloth.* 'Twas the Effect of their Belief that they began, in the Spirit of Humility, to punish themselves for those Sins, by which they had provoked God's Anger; hoping that, by joining this Penance to their Repentance, they might prevail on Heaven to reverse the Sentence pronounced against them, and obtain Pardon of their Sins. 'Tis plain, our Sins cry to Heaven for Vengeance as loud as theirs; nay, are much more provoking, since such great Numbers, living under the Profession of Christianity, but with all the Vices of Heathens, must needs be more highly exasperating to the Divine Goodness, by their intolerable Ingratitude and Contempt of his Mercies. The Sentence likewise pronounced against us is as positive, as that against *Niniveh*; for Truth himself has said, that *Except you do Penance, you shall all likewise perish.* 'Tis as evident then as Demonstration, that our Sins being great, and God having threaten'd us with Eternal Destruction, if we do not Penance, as many as believe God as they ought, seriously apply themselves, with the

the *Ninivites*, to the turning from their evil Ways, and doing Penance for their Sins : And that such as enter not upon this Method, truly believe not God, and shall have the Men of *Niniveh* rise in Judgment against them, who did Penance upon the Preaching of *Jonah*, whilst these, upon the Preaching of the Son of God, hold on still perverse and obstinate in all their evil Ways ; for truly one great Reason of this Obstinacy must be, because they *believe not God* : For 'tis impossible to conceive, that we, who are such Lovers of ourselves, who are so apprehensive of every thing that is like to hurt us, who are so very impatient in all Sufferings, and, being in Pain, are willing to part with any thing for the Purchase of Ease ; 'tis impossible, I say, to conceive, that we, who are thus nicely temper'd, should, for Trifles, and passing Satisfactions, cast ourselves into Eternal Torments ; make Choice of dwelling with devouring Fire, without Hopes of Ease, or Possibility of Relief : And therefore, as many as take this destructive Method, must either have a want of Faith at the Bottom, or so great a Blindness, that tho' they are reputed Christians, yet, in reality, they believe not God as they ought. If we believe a Precipice to be before us, we certainly

certainly retire ; if we know a House to be falling, there is no flattering Satisfaction can keep us in it ; if we see a Place infected, our Care is to avoid it : In this manner Reason effectually works upon us to preserve ourselves ; and whoever does otherwise, we thence conclude, that such an one either has no Reason, or no Information of the Evil. In this same manner works Faith, in order to the avoiding Eternal Evils, which she shews all those to be evidently running into, who live in the Practice of a vicious Life, and known Breach of God's Commandments ; and for such as, upon her Information, avoid them not, it must be concluded they have lost either their Reason or their Faith, or both.

But as for such who have, and make use of, a firm and stedfast Belief of God, their Method is certainly quite different ; for they no sooner reflect on his dreadful Judgments, and consider that eternal Ruin is the unavoidable Portion of unrepenting Sinners, but presently they look into the State of their own Souls ; and if they find them to be so defiled with Sin, or engaged in any such vicious Practices, as necessarily render them displeasing to God, and expose them to all that Severity pronounced against Sinners ; they hence, like the

Ninivites,

Ninivites, effectually forsake their evil Ways, that they may escape his Judgments ; and seriously endeavour, by some voluntary Chastisements, to punish their past Crimes, that so they may turn away his Anger from them. They forsake their evil Ways, as absolutely necessary for a sincere Repentance. They punish Sin in themselves, as an Act of Justice, acceptable to God, due to their Offences, and very powerful, in order to preserve themselves from all Danger of Relapses. This Justice, is what the Scripture not only recommends, but even seems to require, where, in so many Places, from the Mouths of St. John Baptist, of Christ our Lord, of his Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, we have so often repeated the Command of *doing Penance, or bringing forth Fruits worthy of Penance.* And our Redeemer expresses it more particularly, *Matt. 11. 21*; where, speaking of the Repentance of Tyre and Sidon, he says, *They would have done Penance in Sackcloth and Ashes*; and, in commanding this, shews, that true Repentance not only changes the Heart, but likewise punishes the Sin, and humbles the Penitent in Detestation and just Revenge of his past Pride and Rebellion. In consequence of this Doctrine, the Primitive Church ever exacted this from Repenting

pening Sinners, enjoining them very severe Penances in Punishment of their Transgressions ; and likewise by this Severity designing to imprint in them the greater Horror of Sin, and make them more fearful of returning to their Vomit. And tho' the Discipline of the Church be at present, as to these, less rigorous ; yet it still owns, that every Sin is as highly provoking, and deserves as great Punishment now at this Time, as in those former Ages : And if Christians are not now so severe in punishing it, 'tis because they are less zealous in prosecuting the Enemies of God, and more remiss in that Love they owe him ; and there is too great Reason to fear, that, from this Remisness in joining with the Divine Justice in chastising themselves, they think too favourably of Sin, become less sensible of its Grievousnes, and more easy in falling into it.

For as many then as lie under the Guilt of Sin, and have Reason to apprehend the Rigour of God's Justice, they have here laid before them the Method of Christ, of his Apostles, and his Church. These all call upon them to do Penance, and encourage them to undertake the punishing their own Offences. And because all Christians are so unhappily, tho' not equally, miserable,

miserable, as to stand in need of this ; therefore has the Church enjoin'd common Penalties to be undergone by all ; such are every Day of Abstinence, every Fast-day, and most especially this Time of *Lent*. And tho' this Design of the Church be too generally abused, whilst most People, either by their Kitchen-contrivance, or by the Liberty they take, find a Way of passing over these Times of Penance at their Ease, without any Punishment at all ; yet good Christians endeavour to turn them all to the best Account, make them all Days of Penance, and hope by this Means to obtain Mercy of their God. Thus then let us do ; and if we have lost any Time, let us lay hold of the present : 'Tis *Passion-Week*, a Time which obliges to suffering. Let us then, with the *Ninivites*, enter into the true Spirit of Penance ; let us not only forsake our Sins, but chastise them too, and we need not doubt but God will turn from his Anger and forgive us.

Tuesday,

Tuesday, Passion-Week.

LESSON.

Dan. C. 14. V. 29. to the End.

THE Babylonians said to the King, deliver Daniel into our Hands, who has destroy'd Bel, and kill'd the Dragon. Daniel was a Man of Example, who, being a Captive and Courtier to the King of Babylon, adored no other but the true God in the midst of an Idolatrous Court; took no Part with the Impiety of his Prince; with Courage ever inform'd him of the Truth; exposed the Wickedness of those about him; and was not afraid to suffer for him. 'Tis this ought to be the Method of as many, as live not only in a vicious Court, but even amidst the Corruptions of a wicked World. There is a Necessity of great Constancy, not to be seduced by evil Company. Many a Christian has Courage enough not only to dislike, but to resist Wickedness, when it comes alone; but when 'tis back'd with Example and Authority, especially of such as they value or depend on, then it has a more prevailing Power, and, like a Torrent,

rent, carries them down with the Stream. I cannot but heartily lament the Misfortune of great Numbers in this Point, who being Persons of good Principles, would be Exemplary and Virtuous, had they but Constancy and Firmness of Mind proportion'd to their Sincerity ; but for want of this, sink much below their own Designs, whilst through a Weakness of Spirit they act in Compliance with others, and not according to that Light God has communicated to them for their own Conduct.

There is no Christian can be esteemed Good, who, by this easy and irresolute Temper, is persuaded to partake in any Crime ; because such as these, however well inclined of themselves, are over-power'd by the Ministers of Satan, and by their Artifice drawn in to join with them, in their Wicked and Rebellious Practices, against their Sovereign Lord of Heaven, to whom they had promised true Allegiance and Fidelity. And yet God knows how many are thus miserably deluded into all manner of Vice, to the Ruin of their Souls, and yet endeavour to lessen their Guilt, upon reflecting it was not their Choice, but a Compliance : As if complying with Evil were not a real and deliberate Choice, and sufficient to make them

them Enemies to God. Therefore Good Christians will never yield to such destructive Flatteries, but think themselves oblig'd to resist, even to the shedding of their Blood.

But, however, there are still other Particulars, in which even many of those, who pass under the Character of being Exemplary, Regular and Good, are likewise too easy ; and under the Notion of Things being but inconsiderable, join with others in their Practice, to the great Prejudice of Christian Discipline, and Injury both of their own Souls and others. Hence it comes, that in Drinking, Gaming, Liberty of Talking, Freedom of Conversation, Exceeding on Fasting-days, Mis-spending Sundays, and especially in that common Practice of Reflecting, Biting, and Uncharitable Discourses ; many Christians are so easy in taking Part, as Occasions present themselves, that truly I cannot but fear, whatever their Repute be amongst Men, that they very considerably lose Ground before Almighty God, and may thus easily come, at length, to forfeit that Grace, by which they are preserved from greater Evils. For is it not plain, that these are not faithful Servants of God, and do not truly love him with all their

their Heart and Strength, who, on so many Occasions, forsake his Cause, promoting the Interest of the World and Devil, and fail in so many Points of their Duty, which their Heavenly Lord then gives them Opportunity of performing, and certainly expects from them.

'Tis the Obligation of every Christian, according to their different Circumstances, to tread over *Daniel's Steps*, and not to depart from any one Point they see so edifying in him. 1. They are not to be tainted with, or take Part with Evil. 2. They are to discourage and reprove the Evil, they behold in others. 3. They ought to be ready to suffer, whatever Inconveniencies this complying with their Duty brings on them. This we see perform'd by *Daniel* in an extraordinary manner: And since we have the same Master with him, why is it we serve him not with the same Courage and Fidelity? Why is it, we are so easily drawn in to join with others in Practices and Discourses, which in our own Judgments we wholly condemn as Unreasonable, Unjust, or at least Unfitting? Nay, which we are bound thus to censure, in Obedience to God, and our Duty? While we are sensible what it is Almighty God re-

quires of us, is it not a great Weaknes to depart from that, to the Defiance of our own Consciences, in Compliance with I know not what Pretenders to Liberty, and Setters up for enlarging the Dangers of our Salvation ? I am sure, 'tis contrary to the Profession generally made in Confirmation, where we undertake to be faithful Soldiers of Jesus Christ, and to fight against whatever is contrary to him ; and, I think, we might with as much Reason court such our Friends, as either squint or stammer, are deaf or lame, by endeavouring to imitate them in their Deformities, as by complying with them in other Imperfections, as is too commonly done, which are of a more pernicious and dangerous Consequence. This is sinking two Degrees below our Duty, whilst, instead of condemning, we not only omit that, but even take Part in the Evil. This is very unjustifiable in all Christians, who by their Profession are obliged to maintain the Honour and Law of Christ against all Opposers. But most insufferable in those, who by their Character and Function have undertaken to be Guides to Salvation. For if, instead of this, they fall so much beneath their Duty, as to encourage by their Example what is Evil, or even favours Irre

gularity, and suffice

gularity or Disorder, I think they are false to their Master, and help to betray that Cause, which they are solemnly obliged to maintain.

The Way of a True Christian ought to be quite another thing ; that is, he ought to be so resolute in reproving whatever he sees of Evil, and so constant in this (due Regard being ever had to the Rules of Christian Prudence) that his very *Prefence* should become a *Censure* of all that is irregular, and put all into Despair of ever bringing him to partake in their Disorders. This is the Christian's Way ; such ought to be his Constancy, his Resolution and Courage ; and those who any ways fall short of this Method, I fear are wanting in these Qualifications, the necessary Supports of their Character ; and when they should be acting according to these Principles, by their Faint-heartedness are put upon finding Reasons to dispense with their Duty.

'Tis true, there are none can take this Way, but they shall be most likely exposed to Suffering, to Reproaches, Mockery, and Hatred : But what if it were to Lions too ? You see we are to bear it. And is it not much better to lose the good Opinion of such Men, and suffer all their Reproaches, by oppo-

sing their Weakness and Liberty, than to purchase their Good-will, by complying with their Infirmities ? For all such Suffering, as this, is for a good Cause ; and, I question not, is a certain Way that leads to a Crown. Grant me then, O Lord, this Constancy and Resolution of Mind, that no Evil may prevail on me, that I may make War against every thing that is contrary to thee, that in this I may shew myself thy Disciple.

Wednesday, Passion-Week.

L E S S O N .

Levit. C. 19. V. 11. ends V. 18.

KEEP my Laws, for I am your Lord, your God. In this Lesson is presented to us a Catalogue of the principal Sins against God and our Neighbour : And, I question not, but the Design of the Church in this is, that being now in *Passion-Week*, and the Time wherein we commemorate our general Redemption drawing near, Christians may look into themselves, and purify their Souls from the Guilt of these Offences, which otherwise will render them

them uncapable of having Part in the Blessings of this Holy Time, For this End, what can we do better, than look over these Sins again, and this Day make a short Reflection, how far we may be concerned in them, that thus we may discover what Work we have at present on our Hands.

Hear then what our Lord spoke to the Children of *Israel*, for in the same manner he at present speaks to every one of us in particular.

1. Thou shalt not steal.
2. Thou shalt not lie, nor shall any one deceive his Neighbour.
3. Thou shalt not swear falsely, nor profane the Name of thy God.
4. Thou shalt not spread Calumnies against thy Neighbour, nor oppress him by Force.
5. Thou shalt not keep back the Wages of thy hired Servant.
6. Thou shalt not curse the Deaf, nor put a Stumbling-block before the Blind.
7. Thou shalt do nothing that is wicked, nor judge unjustly.
8. Thou shalt not contemn the Person of the Poor, nor honour the Rich; but judge every one according to Justice.
9. Thou shalt not be a Detractor, nor a Tale-bearer; nor shall thou stand up against the Blood of thy Neighbour.
10. Thou shalt not hate thy Brother in thy Heart, but reprove

him, that thou partake not in his Sin.
11. Thou shalt not seek Revenge, nor bear in Mind any Injury done to thee. These are the Sins we are here expressly commanded by Almighty God to avoid, and the Church requires the same of us, most particularly at this Time: For it being now a Time, wherein we are preparing to go up in Spirit to *Mount Calvary*, she desires we would go up to this Holy Mount in such a manner, and approach to the great Solemity of Christ's Passion with such true Dispositions of Soul, as there to partake of the Effects of his Sufferings. Now, what Fruit can we reasonably expect, if we go in Sin? With what Assurance can we appear in the Presence of Christ Crucified, if our Souls are so engaged in Evil, that we seem ready even to Crucify him over again? For this reason, if we have any true Love for our Souls, it ought to be our serious Business to disengage and wholly deliver ourselves from all whatever we apprehend to be displeasing to him: For tho' the Passion of Christ be a Remedy of Sin, yet it is not so for obstinate and perverse Sinners, who go on in the Way of their own wicked Desires, in Defiance both of his Mercy and his Wrath; but only for Repenting Sinners, who sincerely

cerely resolve to forsake all their Evils, and faithfully return to their Duty.

Hence such, as hope to receive Benefit from the Passion of our Lord, look now before-hand, and endeavour to copy out in their own Hearts the same Holy Sentiments they behold in his : And therefore, as they see in him a Detestation of Sin, an earnest Desire of conquering it, and a Resolution of suffering the Extremity of all Pain and Torments for the effecting this ; so they strive to render their Souls conformable to his : *First*, By raising in themselves, upon the best Motives, a real Abhorrence of all Sin. *Secondly*, By earnestly desiring to master and overcome all the Evil they know in themselves. And, *Lastly*, By resolving to refuse no Pains or Scourges, from whatever Hand they come, for the accomplishing this their truly Christian Design. Such Sentiments as these, such a Disposition thus agreeable to Christ's, by which a Christian sincerely espouses the same Cause with him, is certainly the best Preparation for the Holy Time now approaching, and the most assured Means of being Partaker of the Fruits of our Redemption.

But who can be so happy, as to hope for this, since we live encompass'd with so many Infirmities, that 'tis very hard to be free from all the Transgressions here mention'd ? And if none must venture to *Mount Calvary*, but such as are not in Sin ; how few, how very few, must come there ? 'Tis true, the Number of such as are Innocent is but small : But such is the Mercy of God, that whilst he excepts against perverse and stubborn Sinners, he opens his Arms, and invites all those to him, who being sensible of their Weaknesses, and finding themselves oppressed with the Weight of their Sins, earnestly desire to be at Liberty, to be delivered from the Infirmities which disquiet them, and from the Burden of their Iniquities, under which they are in Danger of sinking. 'Tis not therefore that those ought to be discouraged, who perceive themselves subject to many of the Failings here set down ; but only such as are content with the Evils they feel, who are led along by the Violence of disorderly and wicked Passions, and use not just Endeavours for the mastering or moderating them ; for to these I can give no Hopes, since all that is within them is corrupt, since their Pleasure is in establishing Sin, which

which Christ suffers the worst of Torments that he may destroy.

What therefore we ought to aim at, since we cannot presume to be wholly Innocent, is, sincerely to declare War, at least, against Sin ; it is to lament the Miseries of our repeated Offences, and join to our Sighs most resolute Endeavours, in order to the overcoming all those ill Habits, to which we are subject ; 'tis to have no Peace with any Enemy of God, but ever to keep Watch against them, ever to strive to weaken, and by degrees dispossess them of all that Power and Command they have within us. And tho' while I am under this Exercise, and managing this troublesome Affair I have upon my Hands, I may still perceive Failings, yet I will not be dejected ; for I have a certain Confidence in my God, that if I am displeased with my Sins, if I sincerely fight the Battles of my Lord with Hopes of being Conqueror at last, however the Battle may last long ; yet he will not cast me off, nor banish me from the Holy Mount : No, I am assured his coming on Earth was to seek and heal such Sinners, and his Sufferings was to obtain Help and Succours for them. Afflict me then, O God, for the preparing my Soul against this Holy Time : I heartily desire this might be, by being

freed from all Sin : But I will be content with whatever Portion of Grace thou shalt bestow on me. If any Sins yet remain, I will endeavour to destroy them ; and if I go thus fighting every Step up to *Mount Calvary*, I hope I shall still partake of the Blessings of that Place.

Thursday, Passion-Week.

LESSON.

Dan. C. 3. V. 34. ends V. 45.

*A C C E P T us in a Contrite Heart and
Humble Spirit.* 'Twas the Complaint of Azarias, that, in the Time of their Captivity, the Jews had neither Prince, nor Prophet, nor Holocaust, nor Sacrifice, nor Oblation, nor Incense, by Means of which they might find Mercy with God ; and therefore he takes Refuge in a Contrite and Humble Heart ; and hopes so firmly in the Goodness of God, that placing their Trust in him, he has Confidence they shall not be confounded. 'Twas a great Action in this Holy Man, when he saw himself in the midst of the fiery Furnace, and wholly abandon'd by all, thus perfectly

perfectly to raise his Heart to God in Behalf of himself and his People, and so entirely to place his Confidence in him, upon the Hopes of his Mercy, and a Contrite Heart. I can't tell how near we shall come in Practice to this Example, but I know what our Duty is: Not to sink down and be dejected upon every Trouble that afflicts us, so that every ordinary Disappointment becomes as a Weight on our own Spirits, that presses us more down into the Earth, and as a Blind on our Eyes, which in some manner hiding Heaven from us, takes God out of our Sight, that we truly make good in us, what *David* says of the Mountains, *Tange montes & fumigabunt*: If God does but touch them with his Finger, they are presently in Darkness and Smoke. Whereas this is truly to pervert the Design of Heaven, who in afflicting us expects, instead of being cast down, we should look up at him, from whose Hand the Stroke comes: Look up, I say, and adore his Justice; for, being Just in all he does; 'tis our Duty ever to confess him so; 'tis our Duty to praise him in that his Attribute, in which he is as truly adorable as in the rest; and to offer up to him whatever we suffer, since we can suffer nothing,

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but what is a Homage due from us to him. For, as we bear the Character of his Disciples, 'tis our Duty to be ever in Readiness of forsaking all for him, and to love nothing so much, as to prefer the Possession of it before his Will. Hence, as often as God deprives us of what is most comfortable and dear to us, as our Health, our Ease, our Convenience, our Quiet, our Friends, we are obliged to consider this as proceeding from his Holy Will, and that by his Orders and Appointment we are commanded to part with so much for his Sake. If we thus accept it, and endeavour chearfully to submit, we answer our Character; but if it be received with murmuring, excessive and affected Grief, is it not a Demonstration, that we love what is taken from us more than God's Will? And how can we persuade ourselves, that we are prepared to forsake all for Christ, who, upon his touching us in a sensible Part, and demanding even one Thing from us, we either rebelliously murmur against him, or cowardly sink down, as under a Burthen too heavy for us to bear? This is not raising our Hearts to Heaven, as *Azarias*, from the midst of the Furnace; but 'tis even deserting our Cause, before we come in earnest to the Trial. As far

far then as we are wanting in this Part of our Duty, we are bound to use our best Endeavours for supplying the Defect, for obtaining a greater Strength of Mind, and a more perfect Resignation to the Will of God.

And our Endeavours must go yet farther, that is, to fortify our Souls with such an *assured Confidence in the divine Goodness*, as not to lose our Hopes in God, notwithstanding all the Arguments of Despair about us. A good Soul thinks often of God, and not with passing Glances, but with fixed Thoughts dwells so long on the Consideration of his Mercy, Fidelity, Compassion, Fatherly Protection and Goodness, that his Heart is fully possessed with the Greatness of it, sees it to be Infinite, Inexhaustible; nay, that he is essentially all this, that he cannot be separated from it, that 'tis impossible he should forsake or abandon any one, that sincerely depends on him. Hence arises such a Confidence and Hope in him, so well grounded, so securely built and supported, that however Distress and Accidents may terrify Nature yet imperfect; yet upon Reflection it cannot diminish that Hope he has in God, but there is ever a certain Sweetness and Peace in the Center of his Heart,
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notwithstanding all that Bitterness and Confusion, that is about him. 'Tis this interior Comfort and Confidence in God, that has carried his Servants through the severest Trials, and fill'd them with Joy under the greatest Oppressions: For their *Hope* being like their *Faith*, equally founded on God, tho' it may suffer very furious Assaults, yet it can never be overthrown: For as their *Faith* is secured by God's *Truth*, which cannot deceive; so is their *Hope* by his *Goodness*, his *Promises* and *Power*, which cannot fail: Thus, as by a sure Anchor, they are fastned to a Rock, and neither Waves nor Storms can force them from their Hold.

But then they are ever careful to have their *Hope* accompanied with a true *Contrition* of Heart, as knowing there is nothing can possibly obstruct the effect of God's *Goodness*, but their own *Unworthiness*. For tho' the Fountains of the Divine Bounty and Mercy are Infinite, and ever Overflowing, yet our Sins turn those Streams from us, so that we can expect no Benefit from that Abundance, as long as, indisposed by Sin, our Hearts are shut against them. Hence it is the Practice of all Pious Christians, as soon as they perceive the Hand of God to touch them in any Affliction, whether imme-

immediately proceeding from himself, or from the Malice of others, presently to have recourse to *Contrition*, and endeavour by Sighs and Tears to make their Peace with God: That so, if the present Evil be a just Punishment of their Sins, they may, by a sincere Repentance, remove the Occasion of their Misfortune; or, at least, if it be the Effect of his unsearchable Providence, they may take out of the Way all Impediments, which may hinder the flowing in of his Grace, necessary for the Cure of the Evil, or the bearing it with a Christian Patience. This was the Method *Azarias* took, and with such miraculous Success, that 'tis sufficient to encourage us to embrace the same. Misfortunes and Trials we cannot want in this Life; but we may be easily wanting in our Duty of supporting them as we ought: Let then this Holy Servant of God, in the midst of the Furnace, be our Pattern; in all our Troubles let us cast our Eyes on him, and there learn, not to murmur or be dejected, but ever to raise our Hearts to God, with a Faith in his Power and Promise, with Hope in his Goodness, and a Submission to his Will: And if these Acts be attended with a Contrite Heart, we may be assur'd he will

will either powerfully Deliver us, or powerfully Assist us; and by a Light from him we shall be convinced, that we suffer for Justice, to punish us; for a Trial, to humble us; or for his Glory, to sanctify us.

Friday, Passion-Week.

L E S S O N.

Jer. C. 17. V. 13. ends V. 18.

BE not a Terror to me, O Lord; thou art my Hope in the Day of Evil. Those Christians will be very Unfortunate, to whom God himself shall become a Terror: It was the Apprehension of this Evil, made this Holy Prophet cry out, *Be not a Terror to me, O Lord.* And surely, when we consider ourselves, and see we are so far from having any thing of our own to trust to, that all is full of Sin and Misery, Blindness, Uncertainty and Insensibility, 'tis plain we have only this one thing to afford us any Relief, and that is, to have a Confidence in God, and hope that he in his Mercy and Goodness will be our Protector and our Comfort. This, I say,

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I say, is all we have to trust to ; and 'tis all sufficient for those, who place this Trust aright : And no question, he will answer all their Expectations, and fill them with Joys beyond Measure. But what a surprising Consternation will it be to those, who waiting for God to be their Comfort, shall at length find him to be their greatest Terror ? This is a Misfortune too Great to be expressed, and too Terrifying to be truly conceived ; for Christians to be looking for their God, and instead of being relieved with the Sweetness of his Goodness, to be struck with Confusion and Death at the sight of his Majesty, whom they have offended : *Terribiliter magnificatus es* : To these he will be magnified in his Terrors. O God, I adore thy Majesty, and earnestly desire thy Name may be glorified in all Nations ; but as for me, O God, let me not be convinced of thy Greatness by the Terrors of thy Justice, but by thy Infinite Compassion on my Weakness, and the more desirable Effects of thy Mercy.

This, I doubt not, are the common Wishes of us all : But what Method do we take for the accomplishment of these our Desires, and not being disappointed in our Wishes ? You have heard what the Prophet says, *All that forsake Thee, O Lord,*
shall

shall be confounded. This dreadful Confusion shall unavoidably be their Portion, who forsake their God. Now there is no question, but living in Sin is forsaking God ; following the Suggestions of the Flesh and the World is forsaking God ; to be directed by Pride, Covetousness or Revenge, is forsaking God ; and if by true Repentance such as these change not their Hearts, they must at length necessarily be confounded, and they will find God to be their Terror. For when Death at last, by destroying their Senses, shall open their Understanding, and discover to them on one side the Truth of their past Follies, and on the other, the Goodness and Mercy of God, and the unspeakable Treasure of Love in the Passion of their Redeemer, this will be such a Conviction and Reproach of their Blindness, Ingratitude and Unworthiness, that the Sight of God will be their greatest Confusion and Torment, and those very Fountains of Mercy, the Wounds of their Redeemer, will fill them with Rage and Despair. The Light of God's Presence will only serve to shew them their own Deformity ; and not suffering that Light which they hate, they will even chuse (as a Saint observes) to hide themselves in Hell, as a shelter against the Reproaches of their own Guilt. Sad Condition

dition of these, whose only Remedy is in flying from their God ! *Terribiliter magnificatus es :* To these he is magnified in Teravour, because by their Wickedness they had before forsaken him.

But are we not still to consider, whether many others have not reason to fear something of this very Fate, tho' they live not in the Practice of these grosser Sins ? 'Tis the Consequence, you see, of forsaking God ; as far then as we depart from him, so much reason have we to apprehend something of this Evil. Now 'tis evident, we so far depart from him, as we forsake his Law : And in how many Particulars may this be, tho' we be careful to avoid the more notorious Crimes ? For see, he commands us to be Humble and Meek, to be Patient in Troubles, to forgive Injuries, to Love our Enemies, to do Good for Evil, to esteem those Happy that Suffer, to think it a Blessing to be Reproached and Oppressed for Justice sake, to mortify our Passions, to deny ourselves, not to love the World ; he commands us to put on and live by his Spirit : Now his Spirit is a Spirit of Sweetness and Goodness towards all Men ; 'tis a Spirit of Zeal for Justice, of Hatred for all Sin, of Love for Sinners ; 'tis the Spirit of the Cross, of crucifying our own Will, and of continual

tinual Sacrifice ; 'tis the Spirit of forsaking all Creatures, of dying to the World and ourselves, and living to God alone, and doing all things for Love of him. If then we live not by this Spirit : If we so culpably omit our Duty in any of these Points, that the Tenor of our Lives is contrary to these his Directions, and the Maxims of the Gospel ; have we not Reason to condemn ourselves of so far departing from Christ ; inasmuch as the following any other Spirit contrary to his is truly forsaking him ? And if we forsake him, shall we not be confounded ? The Prophet says we shall : And will he not then be a Terror to us ? "Tis what we have Reason to fear. Let us then settle this Point this Day. First consider, whom we at present follow, and resolve to cut off whatever we find not conformable to him. If corrupt Nature, the Devil, or the World put in to be our Directors, we must protest against them, and make choice of Christ our Redeemer, to be our Guide in all our Ways. The Prophet says, *Ego non sum turbatus te Pastorem sequens*, I have not been troubled in following Thee, O Lord, my Shepherd. If we think seriously to escape the greatest of Troubles, it must be by taking Christ for our Pastor, by hearing his Voice, obeying his Commands,

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mands, and living by his Spirit. The making this easy now, will be the sure Means of entailing on us an eternal Peace, and the only Way of securing us against the greatest of all Misforunes, that God may never be a Terror to us.

Saturday, Passion-Week.

L E S S O N.

Jerem. C. 18. V. 18. to the end.

THE N said the Jews, *Come let us contrive against the Just.* In these Words is expressed the Malice of the Jews against the Prophet Jeremy; and these the Church makes choice of, to put us in Mind of the malicious Designs of the same People against Jesus our Redeemer. Hardened against all his Mercies, they conspire against him; blinded with Obstinacy, they see not the Wonders of his Goodness; unmoved by his Miracles, insensible of his Doctrine, stupid under all his Cures, and deaf to all his Calls, they think of nothing but to destroy the Author of Life: *Come let us contrive against him.* This strange Perverseness of theirs ought to raise in us

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at present a Detestation of their Malice, and set us upon the Watch, that while we condemn their Wickedness, we be careful not to imitate them in our yet more intolerable Ingratitude and Blindness. Christ himself has said, *He that is not with me, is against me*: If we are not labouring to take Part with Christ, by fulfilling his Will and obeying his Commands, we take Part with the Jews, and with them conspire against him; there is no Mean betwixt these two Extreams; if we are not for him, we are against him. Approaching therefore now to the Time, wherein we solemnly commemorate his Sufferings, wherein we consider him amidst the Jews tormenting him on the one Side, and his pious Followers bewailing him on the other, it ought to be our Business to reflect on ourselves, and see which Side we espouse. If we are for him, we shall certainly be asserting his Interest, and promoting his Cause.

Now what is the Cause he has undertaken? It is to destroy Sin, to overthrow the Tyranny of the Devil, to overcome the World and the Flesh, and set us at perfect Liberty. Are we espousing this Cause, or no? We need not look beyond ourselves, for a Decision; for we have all these Powers of Darkness sensibly working within us: If we give Ear to them, and permit ourselves to be

be directed by their Suggestions, 'tis plain whose Side we are on. This all those unhappy Christians can determine for themselves, who live in the Practice of any notorious Sin ; they know they are engaged in an Interest quite opposite to Christ, and are daily enlarging the Kingdom of Satan. This how often do they do, by their sinful Discourses, by their loose and scandalous Actions, by the Encouragement they give to all manner of Liberty and Excesses ? By these Methods they spread their Poison, and infect many well-meaning Souls ; first drawing them in, and then by degrees hardening them in Evil, till at length they boldly trample on all the Means of Salvation. 'Tis plain, I say, whose Side they maintain, whilst Christ suffering for the Destruction of Sin, they are spending their Money and their Time to support and propagate it, and even to place all their Delight in what is thus contrary to their Duty, and the Designs of his Goodness ; Christ suffering for Sin, and they delighting in it. Are they for him, or against him ?

There are many others, I fear, tho' not directly abetting, yet so much favouring this Party, that they are to be number'd amongst those who, unthinkingly,

ingly, at least, contrive against Christ. And, as to this Point, let all those examine themselves, who discover in their Souls a Love of Ease, and Earnestness to please and humour themselves in every thing; a Fondness of the common Methods of the World, of its Entertainments, Diversions, foolish Liberties, are ever ready to encourage them, are impatient upon every Disappointment, take Part in all manner of unprofitable and uncharitable Discourses, admire Flatteries and Applauses, with much more of this kind of Infirmities: For in all these there is so much of corrupt Nature, of Sensuality, and the World, that there is no going on in this Way, without weakening the Interest of Christianity, and promoting a Cause, which, either in itself, or in its Consequences, is truly contrary to the Gospel. For consider, is this the Way Christ taught? His Command is, that we ought to hate the World, and forsake it, as much as may be, because the Ways of the World are contrary to his: He bids us be humble and patient, and deny ourselves; take up our Cross, and do Works of Penance; and declares, if we love ourselves, that is, with the Love of this World, it is the certain Way to lose ourselves, and ruin our Souls for ever.

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Is it not plain then how those great Numbers, who understand little, and practise less, of this Life of Christ, and are carried away with the Torrent, and live the common Life of Worldly Men, are truly conspiring against Christ, by promoting a Method very disagreeable to his; by following a Rule and Law different from his; by favouring the World, which he declares to be his Enemy; by loving themselves, their Interest and Pleasure, which he enjoins them to renounce?

This, I fear, great Numbers do, without seriously reflecting what is the End of their Calling; and I wish there were any truly innocent in this Point. For, I see, the current Practice, even of those esteem'd Good, has so authorised this Method, that few discover any reason to doubt of its being Evangelical. Hence it is, most Christians are learned enough in this Way, to find Pretexts for not receiving such uneasy Truths, as are like to incommod them in any thing; and those Doctrines, which oblige them to retrench such Liberties as favour Self-love and Ease, they plausibly reject as severe, and the Notions of morose and melancholy Saints: Thus they go on boldly, studying their own Temporal Convenience, making the World

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and all Creatures serve their Ends, and thinking but by halves of the Obligation they are under of employing themselves and all Creatures to the Honour and Service of God. And what is this, but in its Degree contriving against Christ? But if it has been so, ought it to go on still in this Holy Time? Certainly the Sufferings of Christ ought to prevail on us to change our Method at present, and turn our Hearts from admiring ourselves and the World, to the Love of him. Let us then join no longer with the *Jews* in conspiring against him, but wholly bend our Endeavours for the destroying his Enemies: Let us remember, that all he suffers is for us; and if we suffer something in his Cause, 'tis what he deserves from us; the opposing the World, and all that is pleasing to Sense, is fighting for him, and whoever holds on in this Warfare, with Patience and Constancy, shall receive a Crown.

Palm-

Palm-Sunday.

E P I S T L E.

Philip. C. 2. V. 5. ends V. II.

HA V E the same Sentiments with Jesus Christ. In receiving the Palms this Day, we honour Christ as our King; and in taking Part in his Triumphs, proclaiming Hosanna to the Son of David, we own him to be our Lord and Sovereign, and profess our Obedience to him. And what is this but to desire him to give Laws to our Soul, to chuse him for our Director and Governor, and make a Surrender of ourselves to his Command? And ought we not then, in the first place, to have the same Sentiments with him? Without this, we only perform the Ceremony of the Day, but omit the more substantial Duty. And what were his Sentiments? First, He humbled himself, and being God, became as nothing, taking on him the Form of a Servant. Here is the first Step we are to take; truly to humble ourselves this Day, according to the Pattern given us by Christ. He, being God, laid by all the Glory of his Divinity, and became as a Servant, in Satisfaction

faction for our Offences. Now, if our Sins have this Effect on Innocence itself, so as to cover it with the Infamy of an Offender ; if thus they draw a Darkness over the Majesty of God, and humble it to the Meanness of a Servant, in what manner ought we to humble ourselves this Day, who by Nature being vile Worms, Dust and Nothing, have the Guilt of our Sins, our Insolence and Rebellion against our God, to cast us still down infinite Degrees below that Nothing, which before we were ? There needs no more, than the Consideration of what we really are, to raise in us all the Sentiments of a true and perfect Humility, and to oblige us to confess ourselves Nothing in the Sight of God : But then, to consider the Pride of this Nothing, in refusing to obey its God, in contemning his Commands, in casting off his Authority, in rebelling against him, is a Weight that sinks us much lower : And then to place ourselves in the Presence of our God, suffering for this our Disobedience and Ingratitude, and so severely humbled for our Pride, are such aggravating Thoughts, that whoever seriously reflect on it, must not only enter into the Sentiments of Christ, in being truly humble ; but be wholly surprized and confounded at this their intolerable

lerable Insolence, and pronouncing Sentence against themselves, declare 'tis the Goodness only of God that can suffer it, and that preserves them from falling into that worse than Nothing, which they abundantly deserve. Thus ought we this Day to humble ourselves in the Presence of our Redeemer, and, with all possible Gratitude, return him Thanks, that, being thus miserably Criminal, he requires no more from us, than to transcribe into our Souls what we behold in him ; that is, for us Sinners to be as humble, as he that never offended ; for Criminals to suffer no otherwise, than he who never transgress'd. Blessed be this thy Goodness, O Jesus, who hast shewn us how to return to our Father, and undertaking to be our Master, teachest us no Lesson, but of which, for our Encouragement, thou first lettest us see the Practice in thyself. And does not the Thought of this thy infinite Goodness, as it raises us, so likewise humble us still more ? Infinitely unhappy they, whom neither their own Unworthiness, nor thy Goodness, can make sensible of this Duty.

But wherever this takes Effect, it will not abide fruitless, but will certainly draw more of Jesus into their Souls ; there will not be his Humility only, but

his Obedience too, it being impossible for a Soul to be truly humble upon these Motives, but it will be also obedient : So that as Christ our Lord, in that his State of Humility, became as a Servant, that is, faithfully offered himself to comply with all the Commands of his Father ; so will a Christian, that has once a real Sense of his Unworthiness, and of the infinite Mercy of God in bearing with it, sincerely offer himself to perform all those Commands, his Heavenly Father shall lay on him ; inasmuch as he must necessarily think it just, for Dust and Ashes to serve that Power that made it, to love that infinite Goodness which spared it in his Sins, and follow that adorable Example of its Jesus, who invites it to follow him. And what, if, through its natural Corruption, it finds a Difficulty in the Discharge of this Duty ? This ought to hinder nothing : For if Christ, innocent and spotless, becomes obedient to his Father, not only in the plain and easy Way, but even to the Dying on the Cross ; ought there any Difficulty to be sufficient to discourage us Sinners, and put us out of the Way of our Obedience ? Alas ! all that we are capable of suffering, is so little in Comparison of what we deserve, and so inconsiderable in regard of what God deserves ;

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deserves from us, that, I think, we ought to rejoice, that, after so great Unworthiness, he will accept any Service from our Hands, or admit us to contribute to the Glory of his Name, who are only Worms and Vessels of Dishonour.

We give thee Thanks, O Lord, for this thy infinite Condescension to us; and, tho' seduced by our Pride, by our Wickedness, and our Sloth, we have hitherto too often become thy Enemies, and made ourselves unlike to thee; yet now we desire to have the same Thoughts with thee, and sincerely copy out thy Soul into ours. And first, behold, prostrating ourselves in thy Presence, we humbly acknowledge our own Nothing, and that worse than Nothing, the Misery of our Transgressions. We then adore thee for becoming our Example; and because of thy Humility and Obedience, thou hast a Name given thee, to which all Knees must bow, behold we bend before thee, and require all that is within us to bless thy Name. Whatever we have of Heaven, our *Faith*, our *Hope*, our *Love of God*, behold, it now adores, and confesses all to be built on thee; whatever we have of Earth, the Blessings of thy Fatherly Hand, it here adores; we own 'tis all from thee, and to thee we desire to return it. What-

ever we have of Hell, all our Concupiscence, our Passions, and all other Inheritance of Sin, we force it now here to stoop before thee, and doom it to a perpetual Obedience to thy Law. But this Obedience, O Lord, must be the Effect of thy Grace: Grant us then, in this Time of Mercy, so large a Portion of it, that, as by thy Grace we have been regenerated, and become thy Children, so, by the same Bounty, we may be thy Servants and Followers for ever.

Palm-Sunday.

G O S P E L.

Matt. C. 21. V. 1. ends V. 9.

A Great Multitude spread their Garments in the Way; and others cut down Boughs of Trees, and cast them in the Way. The Palms distributed by the Church this Day, are in Memory of the Triumphant Entrance Christ made into Jerusalem some few Days before his Passion, as is here described in this Gospel. The Palms which this Multitude carried, were Emblems of that Victory Christ was then to gain over Sin and Death, by dying on the Cross a Sacrifice

fice for Sin : The Palms we now take, are Yearly Remembrances of the same Victory of Christ ; and therefore ought to be received with an Acknowledgment of that Mercy, and due Tribute of Thanks for what he suffer'd in our Behalf. The Palms in our Hands, are not only Signs of Joy for Christ's Triumphs, but Arguments of our being engaged in the same Cause with him ; that from this Day we declare War against Sin, and will not cease to pursue it, till it be overcome. We undertake then to be Soldiers, and our Resolution is of Fighting under Christ, our Leader, and our Head.

This is the Signification of the Palms on this Day ; and if carrying them with us, we fix them up in some remarkable Place, where they may be every Day in our Sight ; they may serve the whole Year, to put us in mind of the Cause, in which we are engaged ; they may give us Courage to fight, in Assurance of the Devil being overcome by Christ, and that nothing is wanting for our Victory, but our Labour and Perseverance ; they may inspire us with Resolution, when, through the repeated Assualts of an untired Enemy, we begin to despond, and are tempted to give over the Cause, and be Deserters ; they may be a Reproach to our Treachery and Falseness, when, be-

ing reminded by them, how chargeable the Victory has been to Christ in the Effusion of his Blood, we then reflect, how often we take Part with his Enemy and ours; and having the Palms on our Walls, have nothing of them in our Hearts, but are then unworthily yielding, when we should be fighting with Courage.

In this manner the Ceremony of this Day may be a Yearly Instruction to us, and we may come to understand the Language the Palms speak to us from the Walls. That we may be the better disposed for this, a good Foundation ought to be laid this Day: *First*, In considering, whether we are in Earnest desirous of Victory; because those will never fight, like St. Paul, a good Fight, who do not desire to overcome. The first Step therefore must be, to be displeased with our Subjection to Sin, to groan under that Part of our Captivity, in which we yet are, to lament our great Distance from God, and sigh for Liberty. Where these Dispositions are sincere, there will be Hopes of Victory; because it must be the Sense of a present Unhappiness that must put us upon seeking Relief; and as this Sense is more lively, so will the Endeavours for Liberty be, in proportion, more vigorous, in looking on all Sides, and considering of all Means,

Means, by which Help can possibly come. Those Christians, who come thus disposed, have a Right to the Palms, which are given this Day, because they espouse the same Cause with Christ ; and tho' they are not yet Conquerors, are however in the Way of being so, by having declared Sin their Enemy, and taken up Arms to fight. But as for such who are in Love with their Slavery, and think themselves well amidst their Chains, they can pretend to no Part in this Day's Solemnity, because they are in Peace with Sin, and therefore cannot take Palms, as Followers of Christ, but with Confusion to themselves, in the Acknowledgment of his Power, to whom they know themselves subject. A sad State of Christians, who come to celebrate the Victories of Christ in a contented Subjection to the Devil, and cannot say with Truth, that they desire to be at Liberty !

Secondly, It is to be consider'd, by Christians, whether the Proposals they make this Day, of asserting their Liberty, be sincere Resolutions of the Heart convinced of the Unhappiness of Sin, or only some passing Motions upon the Spirit, sensible indeed of its Disorders, and seeing Reasons for a Change, but not coming in particular to resolve upon undertaking the Means necessary

necessary for effecting it. The Inconstancy of the *Jewish* People, who on this Day proclaimed *Hosanna's* to the Son of *David*, and were soon after prevailed on, by their malicious Leaders, to change their *Hosanna's* into *Crucifiges*, solliciting for his Blood whom they here own'd for their King, is Motive enough to press this Consideration to Christians, for the preventing this Treachery in themselves. The Corruption of an unsteady Judgment is the same now, as it was then ; 'tis easy approving the Way of Virtue and Truth ; but pursuing it is not so easy, especially when the Power of Interest and Pleasure, and a perverse World, come in with their Persuasives, and draw a contrary Way. The Strength of these appear not, while they are at a distance ; and a Soul, touch'd with a Sense of Eternity, apprehends not the Difficulty of overcoming them ; but when they come to make a nearer Assault, then is the Danger ; and how often does it prove so great, that those, who, in the Church, and Hour of Retirement, take Palms, with a Design to fight, when they come into the Field, upon the first Attack, lay them down at the Enemies Feet ; and then, too late, experience their own Rashness, in judging themselves fit for Battle, with thinking only, but without the Preparations



tions suitable to the Enemies Strength, and their own Weakness? Is it not hence, that so many, after the Performance of the greatest Duties, are soon after found amongst the *Jewish* Crowd, in all their wonted Disorders, and now blaspheming God with the same Lips, with which they had so lately blessed him? This Instance of the *Jews*, and our own repeated Experience, is enough to oblige all at present to a stricter Examine of their Resolutions, that so they may not deceive themselves with the Ceremony of Purposes, and, being careless of changing the Heart, be exposed to their usual Inconstancy.

Thirdly, They are to consider of some proper Means for gaining the Victory they propose: The Example of this People may give some Directions; who, in expressing their Zeal to Christ, omitted nothing they were then able to do; but cut down Branches of Trees, and spared not their very Garments to lay under his Feet. All this was no more than an outward Ceremony; but it being the Effect of the inward Motions of their Souls, it was an Argument of their Sincerity and Zeal, and so far ought to be encouraged in all that make Proposals of Good. Resolutions are very much to be suspected, which are nice, and subject to many Exceptions;

ception ; for in these the Love of God appears not so much as Self-love, which, afraid of hurting itself, is ever making Difficulties, and, by this Partiality, puts a Restraint upon the Soul, as to the Ways of Penance, and permits little to be done in that manner, as it ought to be. Hence it is, that in many, after the best Thoughts of Amendment, there appears scarce a Deficiency in Prayers, little Exactness in Fasting, and as little Care in the Discipline of Life ; but all is perform'd with that Indifferency, as if there were nothing serious in them. Now, tho' it must be own'd, that true Repentance and Devotion are Actions of the Soul, wholly interior ; yet there is such a strict Connexion betwixt Soul and Body, that there can scarce be any vigorous Action of Life within, but it will manifest itself by some external Symptoms. And hence, as I cannot but suspect there a prevailing Sloth or Coldness, where I see outward Actions perform'd with a sort of Lameness, or Want of Concern, as in kneeling on one Knee, undecent Lolling, holding a Book with one Hand, frequent Gazing about, &c ; so a Constancy in better Postures speaks a more vigorous Application of the Mind, and is an Argument of a stronger Life, influencing the whole Man.

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I am sensible how far Hypocrisy makes this Rule uncertain ; but since I see God making Choice of an Army, for the Overthrow of *Madian*, from the outward Posture of their Drinking at the River ; and by this distinguishing them from the rest, who were not chosen for Fight, *Judges cb. 7* ; this is Warrant enough for a general Dependance on it. Wherefore I could wish, that no Christians would give Credit to their own Resolutions, till they observe such a universal Industry in all the Duties of Religion and Penance, as may give them Hopes of a sincere Conversion within, and so judge of the Heart by the Fruit. This will give them some Right to the Palms this Day, and prepare them for Victory. Grant, O Jesu, this Spirit to all that meet this Day in Memory of thy Triumphs, that, by celebrating thy Victory over Sin, they may resolutely engage in the same Cause, and never desist, till their Souls are fitted for those more lasting Palms, which thou hast prepared for those who overcome.

Monday,

Monday, Holy-Week.

L E S S O N.

Isaiah, C. 50. V. 5. ends V. 10.

THIS Lesson is rather a History, than a Prophecy, of what the Son of God suffered for our Redemption; by which we may easily apprehend, the Intention of the Church is to call us at present to the Consideration of our Saviour's Passion, and confining our Thoughts to this Subject, to consecrate this Week to God, and truly keep it Holy, according to the Name it bears. For this end, we shall find all the Lessons and Gospels still carrying us to this Point; and, I think, we cannot do better, than follow this Direction; and, because 'tis too large a Matter for one Day, therefore we will divide it, as is usually done, into several Heads, and make it serve for the whole Week. 'Tis what we should with Gratitude consider all our Lives, but most especially at this Time; and the Omission of it now cannot be without Reproof. First then:

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The Agony of Jesus in the Garden.

OF all that passed here, as to the Exterior, we have a full Account from the Holy Scripture ; but as to what passed in the Soul of Jesus, the greatest Part is unknown to us. We know his Mind was struck with the Idea of something most terrible, which he calls *his Chalice* ; that he pray'd his Father that he might not drink it ; that, however, he submitted his Will to his Father's, and freely accepted this Chalice from his Father's Hand ; that the Impression, it made on his Soul, was so quick and violent, as to cast him into a sort of Agony, or Interior Conflict, and made the Blood break forth on every side. This is what the Word of God relates to us ; but as to the Interior, how much is hidden from us ! Many Fathers conclude, 'twas the lively Prospect of his approaching Torments and Death on the Cross, which raised this Storm ; and that he permitted this natural Repugnance of his sensible Part, so to comfort his Members and Followers, when they should be seized with the like Terrors. 'Twas a Design of thy Love, O Jesus, to be tempted in all Things, even the most Imperfect, without Sin, that we might find Comfort and Relief under all our Apprehensions and

and Fears. To grieve and be perplexed, was a Weakness which might, and therefore ought to be undergone by Thee for our Example, that we might learn of Thee this difficult Lesson, how to hold out, when ready to sink under Tribulation and Anguish. This was a wonderful Humility of our Redeemer, who being Author of all the Courage of the Martyrs, was pleased to appear under all the Apprehensions and Weaknesses of the most Dejected. But the more he has humbled himself, the greater Things has he done for us, and the greater Acknowledgments of our Thanks are due to him. And in this he has taught us, that the lowest Degree of Weakness allowable in good Christians, is to ask of God to be deliver'd from the Evils we suffer; but that 'tis our Duty at the same time, that the Love of the Will of God be so prevailing in us, as to make us desire his Will may be done, rather than our own.

Besides this, 'tis the Thought of St. Ambrose, that Christ our Lord foresaw then in Spirit the great Abuse of Christians in regard of his Sufferings; and this was so afflicting to him, as to give Occasion to the chief Part of this Agony. He then saw the many Disorders and Corruptions, with which his Church would be disfigured,

red, which he was then going to establish by his Blood ; and he was pleased, that this Prospect should seize his Soul with Grief ; as at another time the Sight of Jerusalem's Blindness and Obstinacy in rendering all his Visits useleſs, drew Tears of Sorrow and Compassion from his Eyes.

However we apprehend it, it is certain our Lord was then ſensible of ſome Interior Motion very afflicting ; whence we may be encouraged in all Interior Motions, which ſo often disquiet us, to acknowledge them as commission'd from a Power above to assault us ; and from this Consideration ſolicite Heaven for the obtaining thofe Succours neceſſary for our Refifting and Triumphing over them. He that voluntarily accepted this Combat, has in this ſufficiently experienced our Weakneſſeſs, and the Difficulty we have to be Conquerors, ſo that we cannot want Confidence to address ourelfes to him in all our Dangers, and hope for the Relief of his Divine Aſſiſtance, without which we muſt neceſſarily fall a Sacrifice to our Enemies.

Let us hence lay a ſure Foundation of Courage and Hope, under all Evils what-ever ordain'd for the future to be our Portion, and if we yield ſo far, as to petition for a Deliverance, let this be followed with

with an entire Submission to the Will of God ; for then it is, we are to shew ourselves what we so often profess, to be his Children, his Servants, and Soldiers : We may then have repeated Wishes, indeed, of having our own Will done, but our most settled Resolution must be that of doing his ; and if we find instance, if Grief and Dejection in this conflict flow in upon us, we must then place ourselves in Spirit near Jesus in the Garden, and, as we share in his Sorrows, so beg to partake of his Submission ; use a Violence on Nature, and never cease, till bowing down to the Earth, we force a Compliance from our Hearts, pronouncing those holy Words in Union with the Resignation of Christ, *Not my Will, but thine be done.* This most particularly ought to be our daily Practice in Preparation for our last Hour, when, our Agony approaching, Nature will strive against it, and be willing that that Chalice may pass away : But 'tis what we must all drink of ; and we cannot better prepare for it, than by daily endeavouring to make Nature bend, by surrendering all into the Hands of our Maker, confessing, that our Life and Being belong to him ; and that, what he has given, he may again demand, whenever he pleases. Let us therefore beg, this

Day,

Day, that whenever that Hour comes, notwithstanding all Reluctance, we may entirely submit, and breathe out our Souls with the true Spirit of Resignation ; *Lord, Thy will be done.*

Tuesday, Holy-Week.

LESSON.

Jerem. C. 11. V. 18. ends V. 20.

THIS Lesson is another Relation of our Redeemer's Passion, and obliges us to go on with this Subject : Let us then consider this Day.

His being taken in the Garden.

JESUS being humbled in the Garden to the lowest Degree of Weakness, that God permits in his Elect, could give no better Proof of this being his own Choice, than by that great Action immediately following, in going to meet, and delivering himself to those who came to seize him. This is a Degree of Virtue more than is ordinarily required from other Men ; for God wills that we withdraw ourselves from approaching Evils, which seem to threaten ; inasmuch as we know not

not that we have Strength to stand against them, and have no Certainty that God calls us to the Trial. But Jesus Christ being fully assured of the Will of God, made this Advance towards his Enemies, thus to testify that he went willingly to die; and that it was nothing but his Charity obliged him to abandon himself to the Fury of his Enemies.

They make up likewise towards him, meeting his Charity with as great an Excess of Hatred and Rage, having not only these Passions, but the Suggestions of the Infernal Spirits to push them on; and therefore he calls that Power, by which they seiz'd him, *The Hour and Power of Darkness*; by which we are instructed, that the Hatred, with which Men are posseſ'd against the Servants of God, and the Designs they frame for the taking away their good Name, their Liberty and Life, come not only from the Malice of Men, but from those Impressions likewise, with which they are inspired from the Suggestion of the Devil; that God gives them Power to execute their Designs; that we are obliged to look on the Power and Will of God, even in the malicious Practices of Men and Devils; and that 'tis very unjust to murmur against God for permitting this Power over us, who permitted the very same

same against his only Son, especially too, since we can never come to suffer the half Part of that Rage, which was here discharged against him.

Thus then, spurred on by their own natural Hatred, and that of Hell, they seize on his sacred Person, and violently hurry him away before their High-Priests and Judges, to *Annas* first, and then to *Cai-phas*, to hear and judge this Criminal. I could willingly here, methinks, discharge my Anger against this Violence ; but in condemning them, I see myself arraign'd : For since he himself has positively said, *Whatever you do to any of these little ones, you do to me* ; this turns all my Anger home to my own Breast, being an Actor not once, but many times, in all their Barbarities and Injustice. For as often as I have wronged Innocence, and by Force brought its Cause to be judged by Men more partial than these *Jewish Priests* ; as often as I have condemn'd my Neighbour unheard, on bare Presumptions, and by my Authority have drawn in others to join their Votes with me ; so often have I join'd with this blind Multitude, and feiz'd on Christ, who being *Innocence, Justice and Truth*, suffers wherever these suffer ; suffers in all his Members, in every little one. O Jesus ! and what Condition then is mine, who with

with violent Hands have so often dragged thee to be judged ? Jesus, bound and hurried away by the Fury of this People, is the true Copy of my Guilt ; in their Injustice I see my own : I see it, and, O God, may I ever see it ; punish not, I beseech thee, this my Sin with Blindness ; but, since thou art pleased to suffer for Sin, let mine be expiated by thy Sufferings, and I'll endeavour the Thoughts of these shall keep my Soul so watchful, as never more to have a Hand in condemning Innocence. I'll ever be mindful, that whatever is done to any of thy little ones, is done to thee.

Brought then before these Judges, he is there indicted of unheard-of Crimes ; false Accusations are to prove him guilty ; a Servant strikes him on the Face ; he is blinded, buffeted, spit on, and, what torments him most, he is here denied by *Peter*, who having but just before maintain'd his Master's Cause, and protested that he would die with him, now on a sudden grows cold and heartless, is terrified by the Voice of a silly Maid, protests and swears he knows nothing of the Man. See, how unsafe is all Confidence in human Strength. One would have thought the Principles of this great Apostle, bred up in the School of Christ, might have sufficiently armed him against such weak Assaults ; and

and yet, behold, like a poor, ignorant, un-disciplin'd Man, he presently gives up his Cause, and yields. The Truth is, he wanted neither Knowledge of his Duty nor Courage, neither Zeal nor Strength ; being ever, of all the Apostles, the most forward to defend his Master's Right ; but, I fear, he presumed a little too much of this Strength of his ; and thought not enough, how vain it is to trust in Man ; that if God puts not forth his Hand to help, all human Power is nothing : Therefore, at once to learn this humbling Lesson, God lets him fall ; so to teach him for the future to build his Confidence on better Grounds ; not to depend on his own Virtue, but ever to rely on the Divine Assistance, on the Succours of Heavenly Grace. And to convince him still better of his Weakness, behold the Crowing of the Cock raises him not, but he continues in his Apostacy, till his good Master, by an awakening-Glance, at once opens and warms his Breast, melting his stony Heart into Tears of Penance, with which he ever after water'd his aged Cheeks. O God, if thus the Virtue of an Apostle is too weak to trust to, and presently gives way, when once he builds upon it ; how miserable am I, if ever a good Opinion of myself persuades me to depend on my
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own Strength ! This is the ready Way to be left by thee, and be convinced of my Infirmitiy, by miserably falling into Sin. But, however, if at any time, blinded with Self-love, I should be thus unhappy, forget me not in that Distress of Soul ; but with a favourable Glance of Heavenly Light powerfully touch my Heart, that, so raised by thy Grace, I may own my Presumption and thy Power ; and, having effectually bewailed my Sin, return again to thee, and trusting no more in any thing that is mine, I may for ever trust in thee.

Wednesday, Holy-Week.

L E S S O N S .

Isa. C. 62. V. 11, 12. and C. 63, V. 1. 7.

Isa. C. 53. V. 1. ends V. 12.

TIS still the Passion of our Lord we are to consider ; and, for this Day, let it be his Silence in all his Sufferings.

Silence of Jesus in his Passion.

WHatever there is more than human in all the Passion of our Lord, it principally appears in the Silence he observed.

By

By our Words are generally manifested all our Passions; and these are never more provoked, than when we are brought to the Point of defending our Life; then the Desire of living puts us upon justifying ourselves; then Choler pushes us on with Reproach, to lay open all Injustice used against us; and all the other Passions express themselves in their different Language for our Defence. This is what is natural to us; but Jesus Christ speaks not at all, except when 'tis necessary to bear Witness of the Truth; and, after that, nothing can move him to speak; in which he proves his Conduct is not from Passion, but from Reason divinely assisted. 'Tis his Will, we should ever practise those Virtues proper to our State, wherein we are; and not labour in those which are out of Season. Now, to the Passion of our Lord, there could be none more suitable, than a Patience invincible, accompanied with Sweetness and Silence. Tho' there could be none, indeed, but Jesus that could then truly practise these: Everybody, besides him, would have been overwhelm'd in Spirit with the Trouble of so intolerable an Injustice.

But, by his Silence, we see he had his Thoughts more on God, than Man: His

only Businesſ was to finish the Work recommended to him by his Father ; and tho' this was to be effected by the Malice of Men, yet it was without ſinking, or even yielding under it ; rather he took Care, in the manner of his Suffering, and in his excusing it, to ſhew us there is ſomething worthy our Compassion, even in the very Excess of Injuſtice, ſince it always proceeds from a certain Blindneſs, which hinders the Actors from ſeeing the Evil they do : Tho' Man's Spirit, too ſensible of the Evil it ſuffers, looks not about for any Excuse, whereby to leſſen it, but, on the contrary, is ever ſubtil in diſcovering all manner of Circumstances, whereby 'tis poſſible to be any ways ex-aggerated, 'twas not ſo with Jefus Christ ; the Blindneſs of Men moves Compassion in him, even then when he feels the moſt terrible Effects of it : And for this reaſon there are found no Signs of Impatience in all he ſuffers ; but he keeps a ſtrict and holy Silence throughout his Paſſion.

How unlike are we to him ? How far from this holy Dispoſition and Command of ourelfes, whilſt, not governing our Paſſions, they ſo eaſily break out and betray themſelves in our Words ? How often is it, we praetice a ſecret Revenge on others,

others, by casting out such Words, as we hope will gall our Neighbour ? How often again, prompted by Self-love, do we let fall Words to gain Esteem and Praise, even while we suffer ? How many By-designs of human Respect or Interest go mix'd with almost all we say ? And can there be any more effectual Means to be delivered from this secret Corruption, than to address ourselves to Jesus in this his Silence amidst his Sufferings ? Let us then sincerely beg of him this Day, that we may partake something of that Holy Spirit, by which we may be so strongly united to God, that the greatest of Injustices may not be able to force from us any unnecessary Complaint.

How happy a Day to our Souls would this be, could we obtain this Blessing ? 'Tis certain, this Silence of our Redeemer was for our Example ; and as the following it would be our greatest Advantage, so the passing it by with an entire Neglect, must be as great a Misery, and too plain an Argument of our not being his Disciples, or, at least, of being so at too great a distance from him. What then have we to produce in our Behalf ? If every real or imagin'd Injury makes us complain, are we in this our Lord's Disciples ? If every Af-

front presently shews itself in Anger and injurious Words, have we any thing of our Lord in this? If every Wrong, that is done us, puts all into Disorder, and spurs us forward to Revenge, is this to be like our Lord? If every Dislike, we have of any, shews itself in our uneasy Carriage, and in biting Words; if every Trouble, Disappointment, Infirmitiy, or Pain, casts us into Dejection or Impatience, what Resemblance have we of our Master? Truly, upon Reflection, I cannot see in any thing we come shorter of our Duty, than in this; since Christ giving us the Example of a perfect Silence, amidst the Provocations of the highest Malice, we bear nothing so, but let every little Occasion be sufficient, first to disquiet us, and then to put us upon publishing our Troubles in Complaints. Alas! this shews how little Courage we have; how much we love ourselves, who cannot rest till we have moved others to Pity and Compassion: Whereas a due Reflection on what our Sins deserve, would rather oblige us to renounce all such Satisfaction, and be contented with this only Thought, That we have God for Witness of all we suffer; his knowing our Evils ought to be enough to make all farther Information needless, except where Charity or Justice oblige us

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to seek for Remedy. And tho' this Way be difficult to our uneasy Nature, which under all Oppressions is restless, till its Condition is known and pitied ; yet ought we not still to endeavour to imitate our Lord, and not wonder, if we cannot follow him at Ease ? If the Steps are hard, they were his first ; he has led the Way, and we must ever strive to follow, and above all in this, tho' it costs us dear : For, since our daily and most frequent Sins are in Words, speaking such Things as are very injurious to our Souls, and provoking to our Lord, what juster Satisfaction can we make, than by punishing with our Silence the Member which has offended, and letting our Self-denials be in contradicting that very Inclination, which has so often led us into Sin ? This would be the ready Way to our Eternal Peace. Peace then, unruly Member, and let this holy Charm lay that evil Spirit, by which thou movest : And if thou wilt at any time complain, let it be of thy own Misery and Rashness ; let it be of thy daily Disobedience to thy God. Pardon then, O Lord, the infinite Offences, by which, in my Words, I have transgres'd thy Law : I confess my Weakness in this Point ; and tho' I have made many sinful Complaints, yet now for the future let

none be heard from me but this, I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned, my Miseries are infinite, and I have no Help but from Thee.

Maundy Thursday.

E P I S T L E.

1 Cor. C. 11. V. 20. ends V. 32.

THIS being a Day sacred for the Institution of the Holy Eucharist, when Christ at his last Supper consecrated Bread and Wine into his Body and Blood, giving his Command and Power to Priests to consecrate and make a daily Oblation of the same, as a perpetual Remembrance of his Death and Passion ; we must therefore, in consideration of this adorable Mystery, interrupt our former Thoughts, and for this Day apply them wholly to this.

Jesus Christ being now ready to finish his Mortal Life, reserved for the End the greatest Effects of his Love ; and therefore, having eaten the Passover with his Disciples, so to abolish the ancient Law, he was pleased to substitute, in place of all those Figures, that Truth which had been represented

represented by them ; the eating the true Lamb, in place of the figurative Lamb ; the Offering of the Lamb of God, in place of the Sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb : This great Design he put in Execution in a manner worthy of himself. He made known to his Disciples the earnest Desire he had to accomplish this great Mystery : *Desiderio desideravi hoc Pascha manducare vobiscum.* Never at any time did he speak more fully of this ineffable Union, which he desired to have with them. But it being agreeable to the Majesty of God to perform the greatest Works in the plainest manner, without setting them forth with a Pomp of Words, or declaring the Reasons, or foretelling the Consequences, or removing the Difficulties, that so Man may be humbled, and the Faithful raised to the Knowledge of this Mystery by the Help of Faith ; therefore, in a wonderful manner, he follow'd this Method in the Institution of the Eucharist.

He saw the Effects of Grace, which would be wrought in the Hearts of the Faithful by Means of this Mystery, and that he was then establishing the greatest Help for the Sanctification of Souls. He saw all the Sacrileges and Profanations, with which ill Christians would approach to this Holy Banquet, and that the Abuse

of this Mystery would be the Condemnation of many ; and yet he says nothing of all this. He foresaw all the Errors that would be raised against it, and all the Attempts of human Reason to overthrow it, and seems not sollicitous to prevent such Evils : 'Twas because he knew, that, notwithstanding all these Oppositions, he would still propagate the Belief of it throughout the Earth ; and judged it more becoming himself to triumph over human Reason by plain Words, supported by the Force of Grace, than fenced by human and studied Precautions. Grant, Lord, that the Plainness of thy Works and Words may be no Occasion of undervaluing them in our Eyes ; but that in this we may confess the Greatnes of thy Mysteries deliver'd to us in a Way so unlike those of Man, who being in all Things poor and miserable, is ever seeking Ways to set forth and magnify all he does, and himself in all his Weakness.

However, God has given this Liberty to our Faith, to endeavour to penetrate into the Ends of this Mystery ; having so order'd it, that Understanding is to be the Recompence of our Belief : *Nisi credideritis, non intelligetis.* This Expedient, made Choice of by Jesus Christ to manifest his Love to Men, and to be a

Help

Help to their Salvation, is most certainly above their Thoughts, and what they are not able to comprehend ; but, however, it has nothing in it but what is most becoming the Majesty of God, most suitable to his infinite Charity, and seems directly design'd to make us understand the End for which his only Son became Incarnate. God would be united to Men by a Union ineffable and incomprehensible ; he would be the Beginning of all their Thoughts, and of all the Motions of their Hearts, in a manner most resembling that by which the Word was united to human Nature. This Union he would have effected by Jesus Christ Incarnate ; and what more lively Idea could he give of this, than by ordaining that Jesus made Man should be united to our Bodies and Souls by means of this Mystery, and be thus the Pledge and lively Figure of that eternal Union, which God will have with his Elect, by means of his Son.

By this End of the Institution of the Blessed Eucharist, may be framed a Judgment of their Crime, who receive Jesus Christ into a Heart quite empty of the Love of God, and full of the World : For this Mystery being a Sacrament of the Charity of God towards Man, and
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of the Union he would have with him, whoever receives it without Love, in effect declares to God, that he is not at all moved with his infinite Love; that he renounces the Design of the Incarnation; that he will have no Part in it; that his Happiness is in being united by Love to Creatures, and not to be united to God: And therefore 'tis not strange, the Apostle declares such an one guilty of profaning the Body and Blood of our Lord; that is to say, of having render'd useless the Sacrifice of his Body and Blood, and made void that Mercy, he has shewn us in the Eucharist, by which he design'd to unite them to us; 'tis properly to refuse God's reigning over us, and prefer his Enemy: *Nolumus hunc regnare super nos.* And this it is, that makes the Enormity of this Crime.

Grant, O God, this Day we may truly raise our Hearts to give Praise and Thanksgiving for this adorable Mystery: And, since thy Design in it was to unite us more perfectly to thyself, let it be now the Effect of a new Mercy so to move our Hearts, that whenever we approach to it, we may approach with Love, and by means of it be so effectually united to thee, that it may not be in the Power of Earth or Hell to break those Bonds
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of Love, or any more divide us from thee.

Maundy Thursday.

G O S P E L.

John, C. 13. V. 1. ends V. 15.

*J*ESUS having loved his, that were in the World, he loved them to the End. This Love he express'd in a most particular manner in this Day's Institution ; when, being now to depart out of the World, he left us his Body and Blood under the Forms of Bread and Wine ; that so, being ascended to his Father, he might not leave us Orphans, but still abide with us for the Food and Nourishment of our Souls in their Spiritual Life, for the Support of our Banishment, the Comfort of our Pilgrimage, to be our Security in Dangers, our Strength in Temptations, our Physician in all Distempers, our Counsel in Difficulties, our Encouragement in Troubles, our Help in Infirmities ; in fine, to be all to us that can be necessary, for carrying us through the Evils of this Life, to the Possession of that Eternal Happiness, which

which he has purchased with the Price of his Blood.

This was the pure Effect of his Mercy and Love to us; for, if we look on ourselves, what do we see there? Nothing but Ingratitude, monstrous Self-love, Pride, Sensuality, Stubbornness, and Sin. We see there all that can possibly provoke him to Anger: We see there enough to fear his Indignation, and to draw upon our Heads all manner of Evils here, and a perpetual Exclusion from the Sight of God. But that he should be sollicitous for our Salvation, that he should employ his infinite Wisdom and Almighty Power in effecting it, that he should make his incomprehensible Majesty stoop to that humble Expedient of becoming our Food: This is the Work of his Mercy and Love to us; 'tis this Love we are called this Day to acknowledge and adore; and it must be a Reproach to us of Insensibility, if we are wanting in this Duty.

This is perform'd in Part, by preparing a decent Place for the Blessed Eucharist, where it is attended with Lights and Flowers; and as far as these are the Acknowledgments of our Gratitude and Respect, so far they may be acceptable to him, whom we thus honour: But while the Mercy is to us, we must not leave the Tribute of

Praise

Praise to these insensible Creatures ; we must pour forth our Hearts before our God in the Confession of his Power and Goodness ; we must join with the Choirs of Angels, in giving Glory and Adoration to him that sits on the Throne ; we must return him our Love for his Love to us ; and, upon the Sense of our Weakness, beseech him to complete the Mercy of this Day, in teaching us worthily to praise him, and sincerely to love him.

That there may be some Arguments of this, we must not be contented with the Sacrifice of our Lips, but resolve upon the more substantial Way of giving him Honour, which is, by imitating his Example. Let this then be the Business of this Day, to consider those Lessons which Christ gives us in the Blessed Eucharist, and then to undertake the Practice.

First, We see Christ in this Mystery, offering himself every Day a Sacrifice to the Glory of his Father : And is not this to teach us, that, being now sanctified by the Blood of the Lamb, our Lives ought to be a perpetual Sacrifice to God ? We may begin this Sacrifice by the Oblation of ourselves ; and we have the Opportunity of practising it, in directing all we do, and all we suffer, to the Glory of God ; in making all our Inclinations bend

bend to the Divine Will, and letting no Authority of Custom or Example draw us from our Duty. We may carry it on, by the Oblation of our Time to God, by confining it to the Obligations of our State, and the great Affair of Eternity. Why should that be consumed in Idle-ness, Humour, and unprofitable Company, which is granted us for working out our Salvation ? Have any a Stock of this in Reserve, that they are so prodigal of the present ? See what a Reformation may be made as to this Point, and let not that be any more thrown away upon Trifles, which may be so easily sancti-fied, and be made a Sacrifice to God. This Sacrifice is to be completed, by bringing under this Head all worldly Goods, which being the Gift of God, ought to be employ'd with Reference to him, that so he may be glorified in all his Creatures. This is done, in what-ever is for the Support of our Being ; which, by the Order of Providence, is part of our Care. After this, how large a Field is open before us, in the Relief and Comfort of such, as want what God hath deposited in our Hands, to be distributed, when he calls for it by the Cries of the Distressed ? How much of this has been mispent, which might have

have been given to God in his Servants ? And is not so much lost ? Think now of a better Method, such as may be more answerable to the Goodness of our Lord, and more serviceable to our Eternal Good.

Secondly, We see here the humble State of our Lord, confining both infinite Majesty, Power and Glory, under the poor Elements of Bread. Is not this his Humility a Reproach to all our Desires of Ambition and Pride ? Can we contemplate this Humility in him, and be at Peace with those our Inclinations, which put us upon all manner of Contrivance for magnifying ourselves, for appearing considerable in this World, and being thought better than we are ? Is it this we learn in the School of Christ ? Or can we possibly fit down contented with the false Perswasion of being his Disciples, when we see even our most deliberate and studied Practice to be contrary both to his Doctrine and Example ? Our Inclinations to Pride may find some Plea, in being not subject to us ; but to favour, and so far approve them, as to make it the Contrivance of our Thoughts, the Busines of our Time, the Expence of our Money, to promote their Suggestions, where can this find Excuse ? It may be said,

said, the World expects it ; but what an Argument is this to such as have not the World, but Christ for their Master, who in Words and Life teaches them, not to follow, but hate the World ? Look well on Christ, and see, if there be not a Necessity of reforming ; and this, upon such Motives, as cannot be call'd Scruples, but by those only who are willing to darken the Light of Heaven, that they may not see themselves going out of the Way, and be obliged to the ungrateful Trouble of denying themselves, and their admired World.

Thirdly, We see Christ in a State of Patience, bearing with the Blasphemies of Unbelievers, with the Sacrileges of Un-worthy Receivers, and being Advocate, even for those who have offended him. This Example is a Check to our forward Impatience, Passion and Uncharitable Animosities, which are ever ready to break out, upon any Uneasiness or Provocation. This is the Effect of our Pride, Self-love, or nice Temper, which cannot bear any Contradiction, without Confusion, and declaring War upon the Aggressor. And is this according to the Doctrine of our Master ? The Marks of the Old Man appear in this Disorder ; but there is nothing

nothing of the Spirit of Christ, which every where requires Patience and Submission, obliges us to keep Peace, to forgive Injuries, and to overcome Evil with Good. If this be the express Will of God, and Command of the Gospel, what can be said of the contrary Practice; but that 'tis a departing from God, and his positive Law? And can the Professors of the Gospel tolerate this in themselves, and be at Peace? This must not be, because they can no otherwise hope to be united with God for all Eternity, than by living united with his Will here in this Life: And if Nature be averse to this, this Aversion must be resisted and overcome. Here then is our Task, and in this we must labour all our Lives, to bring Nature into a due Subjection to the Will of God; if it cannot be done so easily, it must be effected with Labour; the Difficulty must not be a hindrance to the Work. Patience must be obtained under all Troubles; Peace must be kept amidst all Provocations; Charity must be preserved amidst the greatest Injuries. Such is the Doctrine and Example of Christ? and since he allows no Dispensations, we cannot dispense with ourselves, but with the Transgression of his Law, and forsaking him.

Christians,

Christians, here are some principal Lessons Christ teaches us in the Blessed Eucharist, and no Praises we can give him will be acceptable, nor any Adoration be sincere, if our Hearts be not prepared to receive these Impressions, and firmly resolve to live in the Practice of them. If you believe Christ to be the Food of your Souls, it is thus you must be fed by him; and on these Terms only can he abide in you, and you in him. Help us, O Jesus, in this difficult Task; teach us the Love of God, and of our Neighbour; teach us to be truly Patient, Meek and Humble; give us thy Spirit that we may follow thy Example, and let the Power of thy unspeakable Love ever prevail in us, against all the Power of Corruption, Self-love and Sin.

For this Day of the Institution of the Blessed Sacrament, it may not be improper here to add some Devotions suitable to the Occasion.

I.

IT was on this Day our blessed Redeemer, knowing his End was drawing near, and that by Death he was to be separated from his Children, and soon after to ascend to his Father, where he was to abide Glorious

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Glorious for ever, by an admirable Contrivance of his Love found Means, by which he would still be present with them to the End of the World ; leaving his Body and Blood under the Forms of Bread and Wine, and thus in a most wonderful, tho' humble Way, fitting himself to be the daily Comfort and perpetual Food of our Souls. This was the Effect of thy Love, O blessed Redeemer, towards Man, that knowing his Weakness, thou might'ft be ever ready to speak to his Heart, and instruct him to warm his Breast with thy Charity, and quicken him to make a Heaven of his Soul, and sanctify him to thyself. O God, what Return shall I make for this thy infinite Mercy ? I here prostrate, adore and praise this thy Goodness, and in sincere Thanksgiving pour forth my Soul before Thee. But what a poor Return is this of my Praises for thy Mercies ! A Worm of the Earth bowing down for thy Blessing and Gift of an infinite Value ! No, rather let all thy Creatures, both in Heaven and Eearth, join with me to bless thy Name : I now call them to my Assistance, to sing to Thee a Hymn of Praise.

Our Lord Jesus has given himself to be our Food for ever.

All

All you Works of our Lord, bless our Lord, praise and glorify him for ever.

Angels of our Lord, bles us our Lord ; bless our Lord, you Heavens.

Bless our Lord, you Waters which are above ; all you Powers of our Lord, bless our Lord.

Sun and Moon, bless our Lord ; bless our Lord, you Stars of Heaven. Ice and Snow, bless our Lord ; bless our Lord, both Nights and Days ; Light and Darkness, bless our Lord. Lightning and Clouds, bless our Lord. May the Earth bless our Lord, praise and glorify him for ever.

For our Lord Jesus has given himself to be our Food for ever.

Priests of our Lord, bles us our Lord ; Servants of our Lord, bless our Lord.

Spirits and Souls of the Just, bless our Lord ; you Saints and humble of Heart, bless our Lord.

Let us bles the Father and the Son and Holy Ghost, let us praise and glorify him for ever.

Blessed art thou, O Lord, in the Heavens : Thou art worthy of Praise, and Honour, and Glory, for ever.

For our Lord Jesus has given himself to be our Food for ever.

II.

MY Lord and my God, prevent now my Soul with the Blessings of thy Sweetness, that I may appear in the Presence of this great Mystery, with a Devotion suitable to the Greatness of that Love, with which it was instituted by Thee.

Raise up my Heart, and powerfully draw it to Thee, and deliver me from all Dulness of Spirit, which too often, as a Weight, keeps down my Soul.

Pour forth thy saving Grace upon me, that I may in Spirit now taste thy heavenly Sweetness, the Fulness of which is in a wonderful manner comprehended in this Sacrament.

Enlighten my Eyes, that I may with Profit contemplate so great a Mystery ; strengthen my Faith, that I may firmly believe it.

For this Mystery is not the Work of Human, but of a Power Divine ; 'tis not the Thought of Man, but thy infinite Wisdom, that has ordained it.

Wherefore there is no mortal Creature, of itself, capable to comprehend its Excellence, it being above the Understanding even of Angels.

What then can I conceive of a Secret so Sublime and Holy ? I, who am an unworthy

worthy Sinner, and nothing but Dust and Ashes!

But I come before Thee, my God, in the Simplicity of my Heart, with a Faith sincere and firm.

I come with Respect, and truly believe thou art here really present in this divine Sacrament, Christ Jesus, God and Man.

Which thou hast instituted for our Good, both of Body and Soul; for the Remedy of all our Evils.

'Tis by this thou art pleased to heal our Wounds, moderate our Passions, and weaken those Temptations which assault us.

This is the great Comfort of a Faithful Soul, which being in Banishment here below, with Joy considers the infinite Treasure he in this possesses; that in all its Anguish and Distress he can ever have Recourse to Thee, and be filled with thy Sweetness, which not only refreshes, but raises from Death to Life.

O wonderful Goodness, and Condescension of our God, not to be comprehended; That thou being our Lord, and our God, whom the Heavens cannot contain, art pleased to become the Nourishment of our poor Souls, and employ all the Riches of thy Divinity,

to

to supply our Necessities with Heavenly Goods.

III.

I Praise thee for this thy Goodness, and desire that thy Name for this may be eternally bleſſ'd.

I humble myself in thy Presence, adoring thy infinite Majesty, and confessing my own Nothing.

Thou art the Holy of Holies, and I am nothing but Misery and Sin.

Thou vouchſafest to come down to us, who are unworthy to lift up our Eyes to thee.

Thou comest to us, and deſireſt to abide with us; thou art ever inviting us to this Banquet, and calleſt us to eat of this Bread of Heaven, this Food of Angels, which is no other but thyſelf, *who art the Bread that cameſt down from Heaven, and giveſt thy Life for the World.*

This is the Excess of thy Love, thus to become our Nourishment. How wonderful are thy Works, *O Lord!* How powerful thy Hand! How incomprehensible is thy Truth!

Rejoice, my Soul, and give Thanks to God for this his Gift of infinite Value; for this Heavenly Comfort thy Redeemer has bequeathed thee in this Vale of Tears.

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For

For as often as thou approachest to receive the Body of our Lord, so often thou renewest the Work of thy Redemption, and partakest of the Merits of Christ.

My Soul magnifies my Lord, and my Spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.

How ought my Heart to be inflamed with Love, and even break forth into Tears of Joy?

For that thou art here truly present in this Divine Mystery, tho' hid under the Sacramental Vail.

And this was a necessary Compliance with our Weakness: For if thou wert to appear in the Majesty of thy Glory, who could stand before thee?

As it is, I truly possess and adore him, whom the Angels adore in Heaven: I possess him by the Help of Faith, and under a Shadow, whilst they enjoy him without a Vail, even Face to Face.

But with this Assurance of Faith I am content, and desire to go on by its Light, till the Day of Eternal Brightness begins to appear, and the Curtain is drawn which is betwixt me and my God.

Be thou praised, O my God, by all People of the World; by all Tribes and Tongues: May all give Glory to thy Holy Name. *a Kemp.*

IV.

I Will Glorify thee, my God and my King ; I will Bless thy Name for ever and ever.

I will Praise thee every Day, and Bless thy Name in all Ages.

Great is our Lord, and worthy of all Praise ; Infinite and Incomprehensible in his Greatness.

All Ages to come shall praise thy Works, and make known thy Power.

They shall publish the Magnificence of the Glory of thy Holiness, and proclaim thy Wonders.

They shall declare the Power of thy terrible Judgments, and manifest thy Greatness.

They shall honour the Memory of thy Excess of Goodness, and sing forth the Praises of thy Justice.

Tender and Merciful is our Lord ; he is Patient, and full of Compassion.

Our Lord is Good to all, and his Mercies are above all his Works.

May all thy Works praise thee, O Lord ; may all thy Saints bless thee.

May they publish the Glory of thy Kingdom, and make known thy Power ;

That the Sons of Men may understand thy Power, and the Glorious Magnificence of thy Kingdom.

Thy Empire is an Empire of all Ages, and thy Kingdom shall have no End.

Our Lord is Faithful in all his Words; he is Holy in all his Works.

Our Lord is the Supporter of all that are weak, and gives Courage to all that are dejected.

The Eyes of all thy Creatures, O Lord, look towards thee; and thou givest them Food in due Season.

Thou openest thy Hand, and fillest every Creature with Blessings.

Our Lord is Just in all his Ways, and Holy in all his Works.

Our Lord is near all that call upon him; all that call upon him in Truth.

He will do the Will of all that fear him; he will hear their Prayers, and save them.

Our Lord watches over all those that Love him; but he destroys the Wicked.

My Tongue shall declare thy Praises, O Lord; and let all Flesh bless thy Name for ever and ever, *Psal. 144.*

V.

AND now, Lord, while I here confess the Greatness of thy Power and Goodness, I cannot but lament, and with Confusion of Soul here acknowledge my own Weakness and Unworthiness, who have been so often present at the Celebration of these thy Holy Mysteries, but without a true Sense of what was done, and without the Reverence due to thy Majesty ; who have again so often approach'd to partake of this Divine Food ; but, O my God, with how little Recollection of Spirit, with how poor a Preparation for so great a Guest ! All these my Sins return fresh into my Mind, now being in thy Presence, and strike it with a certain Horror of its own Ingratitude. But however miserable and sinful I have been, thou art still Good and Merciful, and full of Compassion, and ready to forgive all those, who, in the Spirit of Humility, acknowledge their Unworthiness, and with all Sincerity resolve upon Amendment.

Wherefore, Lord, now prostrate in Spirit before thee, I make my Address to that thy Infinite Goodness, which moved thee in this humble manner to condescend to

our Weakness ; and beseech thee to forgive me all those my Sins, by which I have been any ways wanting in my Respect due to this most Venerable Sacrament. I beseech thee to pardon me all my irreverent and indecent Behaviour in Time of Mass, while the Priest, thy Minister, has been offering this awful Sacrifice to thy Glory ; and I, by my Levities, have been provoking thy Anger, and given ill Example to my Neighbours. Pardon me likewise my great Sloth and Neglect in not using Means to come to a true Understanding of this great Oblation ; having been so often present at it, but without a true Sense of what was done, or a due Apprehension of thy Infinite Love towards us in this Holy Institution. Pardon me all those Infinite Distractions, I have either wilfully or negligently admitted in Time of Mass, by which I have wrong'd my Soul in entertaining it with Follies, instead of the Wonders of thy Goodness, and lost the Opportunity of advancing in thy Love. Pardon me all whatever other Oversight or Sins of this kind I have at any time been guilty of, and now shew Mercy to thy Servant. But, above all, pardon me my great Unworthiness in presuming to receive this Divine Food. How often have I approach'd to thy Table without due

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Preparation, without a true Sense of my Obligation, with a Mind distracted and worldly ! How often have I offer'd my Heart for thy Habitation, which has been yet disorder'd with very great Imperfections, and, I fear, defil'd with Sins ! And then how have I return'd from this Banquet to all my Weaknesses, and taken no Care for thy abiding with me ! my turning from thy Table has been turning from thee : O God, my Failings in this kind have been without number ; and will they not be my Judgment and Condemnation, if thy Mercy prevents it not ? Turn not therefore from thy Servant in Anger, but look on me with the Eyes of Compassion : I confess my Sins, and here lay them all before thee, and hope in this Day of Mercy not to depart without thy Blessing : I know thou canst not refuse the Petition of a contrite Heart, a Heart that is sensible of its Offences, and truly desirous to amend. In Confidence of this, I now humble myself before thee, and acknowledging all my Ingratitude and Unworthiness, here in the Words of a true Penitent I sue for Mercy and Pardon.

VI.

HAVE Mercy on me, O God, according to thy great Mercy.

And according to the multitude of thy tender Mercies, blot out my Iniquity.

Wash me yet more from my Iniquity, and cleanse me from my Sin.

Because I know my Iniquity, and my Sin is always against me.

To thee only have I sinned and done Evil before thee, that thou may'st be justified in thy Words, and overcome when thou art judged.

For behold I was conceived in Iniquities, and in Sins has my Mother conceived me.

For behold thou hast loved Truth ; the uncertain and hidden Things of thy Widow thou hast made manifest to me.

Thou shalt sprinkle me with Hyssop, and I shall be cleansed ; thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than Snow.

Thou shalt make me hear Joy and Gladness ; and the Bones that are humbled shall rejoice.

Turn away thy Face from my Sins, and blot out all my Iniquities.

Create a clean Heart in me, O God ;
and renew a right Spirit within my
Bowels.

Cast me not away from thy Face ; and
take not thy Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the Joy of thy Salva-
tion ; and confirm me with a perfect
Spirit.

I will teach the Unjust thy Ways ;
and the Wicked shall be converted to
thee.

Deliver me from Blood, O God, the
God of my Salvation, and my Tongue
shall extol thy Justice.

Thou, O Lord, wilt open my Lips,
and my Mouth shall declare thy Praise.

Because if thou wouldest have had Sacri-
fice, verily I had given it ; with Burnt-
Offerings thou wilt not be delighted.

A Sacrifice to God is a troubled Spirit ;
a contrite and humble Heart, O God,
thou wilt not despise.

According to thy Good-will, O Lord,
deal favourably with *Sion*, that the Walls
of *Jerusalem* may be built up.

Then shalt thou accept a Sacrifice of
Justice, Oblations, and whole Burnt-Of-
ferings ; then shall they lay Calves upon
thy Altar.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost.

As it was in the Beginning, now and ever shall be, World without End. Amen.

VII.

BUT being now desirous of Pardon, for all these my Sins, I here offer thee, O Eternal Father, this thy beloved Son, in whom thou art well pleased. Let him be my Advocate, who has laid down his Life for the Pardon of my Offences. He is the High-Priest sprinkled with his own Blood ; he is a Holy Victim ; he is a Lamb without Blemish, who being without Sin took on him our Sins, and by his Sufferings has healed our Wounds. Behold in him is my Hope, in Christ Jesus thy Son, my Redeemer. Despise not, I beseech thee, this Offering I make thee ; but look on the Face of thy Christ, who, for our Salvation, became obedient even to the Death of the Cross, and gave himself a Sacrifice for our Transgressions. Is not this thy Son, whom thou hast deliver'd up for the Redemption of us thy unworthy Servants ? Remember, O Lord, it is he, whom being equal to thee in Glory, thou hast humbled in the Participation of our Nature, that we might be Partakers of thy Divinity. Have regard therefore to thy Son, and behold

behold that in him, which may move thee to have Compassion on me thy Servant ; his Wounds are ever open to thee, and through them may my Wickedness be for ever hid from thee ; my corrupt Flesh has provoked thy Anger ! Let the Flesh of thy only Son move thee to Mercy. Have Mercy on me, O Holy, Almighty and Eternal Father ; look on this Spotless Lamb, and through his Sufferings and Blood forgive me, I beseech thee, all my Sins ; supply all my Omissions, Negligences and Defects, and receive me into Favour.

And thou, O Lord Jesus Christ, turn not thy Face away from me ; nor despise me, O God my Salvation : Accept the Petition of thy Servant, who for me didst take upon thee the Form of a Servant. Accept me, an unworthy Sinner, since thy Coming was to save Sinners. I have been an infirm and lost Sheep ; but since thou camest to heal what was wounded, and find what was lost, accept me now, O Eternal Shepherd, and establish me in thy Flock by thy Powerful Grace. Present me to the Eternal Father, in Virtue of all thy Merits, that, through thee, I may obtain his Blessing and Favour, which of myself I do not deserve. Into thy Hands I commend my Spirit, who hast
redeemed

redeemed me, O God of Truth. Thou art my Hope, and wilt restore my Inheritance to me.

VIII.

THOU art the Good Shepherd, who hast given thy Life for thy Sheep, I am the unhappy Sheep that was lost : Take me now on thy Shoulders, and restore me to the Fold ; for what canst thou deny me, who hast given thyself for me ? Rule and govern me in this Pasture, where thou hast placed me, till I come at length to the Pastures of Eternal Life. O true Light, who enlightenest every one, that comes into this World, enlighten my Eyes, that I sleep not the Sleep of Death ! O Fire ever burning, and never wasting, behold here thy Servant cold and tepid ! Enflame my Reins and Heart with thy Love, for thou camest to bring Fire on Earth ; and, O Lord, cause it now to burn in me. O King of Heaven and Earth, rich in Mercy, behold I am poor and needy ; thou knowest where is my greatest Want ; and thou alone canst help me : Help me then, O God, and out of the Treasure of thy Infinite Goodness, supply all the Necessities of my Soul. My Lord and my God, behold I am thy Servant, give me Understanding,

ing, raise my Affection, that I may both know and do thy Will. Thou art the Lamb of God, that takest away the Sins of the World ; take from me, I beseech thee, whatever is hurtful to me, and displeases thee ; and give me what thou knowest is acceptable to thee, and profitable for my Eternal Good. Thou art my Love and my Joy, my God, and my All : May the Power of thy Love wholly possess my Soul, that I may die to the World, and live to Thee, who for Love of me didst die on the Cross, my God and my All.

And now, Lord, since Dust and Ashes has presumed to speak, permit me to add one Petition more in behalf of those unhappy Souls, who living in Darkness, know not how to praise thy Name ; as likewise of those others, who believe not the Wonders of thy Goodness in this Holy Mystery. Discover thyself to them, I beseech thee, that they may know thy Truths, and give them Faith to believe them. Remove from them whatever Vail is before their Eyes, and let thy Light shine upon them : Let no human Weakness exclude them from thy Blessings, but bring all to partake of that Banquet, thou hast appointed for the Food of all. O Lord, encrease thy Flock for the Honour

nour of thy Name, that all Nations being brought into thy Fold, may there taste of thy Sweetness, and be nourish'd with thy Blessings. May all People come and adore thee : Let none perish, whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious Blood. In the Name of all I here adore thee ; accept, I beseech thee, the poor Homage I pay thee. I bow here before thee, and wish all Nations of the Earth were here to bless thy Name. Let all the Earth bless our Lord, and all Nations sing Praises to his Name, because our Lord is good, and his Mercy endures for ever.

Having employ'd a good Part of this Day in Devotions, due to this Holy Mystery of the Blessed Eucharist ; on Thurſday, in the Evening, the Church calls us again to the Consideration of Christ's Passion ; and this ought to be the Subject of our Thoughts for what remains of this Day, as likewise for the Night following.

Devotions on the Passion.

BEING now to enter into the Thoughts of thy *Passion*, give me Grace, Dear Jesus, that I may perform this Devotion with a true Sense of thy Sufferings, with a Gratitude due to the Greatness of thy Love, and with such an interior Change of

of my Soul, that from henceforth I may never be at Peace with thy Enemies, or take Part with them, in adding to thy Sufferings by my Sins. Stand by me now, my Lord, and quicken all the Powers of my Soul, that in thy Wounds I may see the true Measure of thy Charity, to adore it ; and of my Offences, for ever to detest them.

Agony of Christ in the Garden.

IT was on this Night my Redeemer went into the Garden of *Gethsemani*, where having a lively Sense of all the Cruelties he was now to suffer, he cryed out, *My Soul is sad even to Death* ; and then falling prostrate on his Face, thus raised up his Voice to his Eternal Father : *Father, if it be possible, let this Cup pass from me : But not my Will, but thine be done.* Here it was that inward Conflict of his Soul broke forth into Streams of Blood ; and he became so truly oppressed, from the great Repugnance Nature had to suffer, that he even admitted of an Angel's Comfort. Great was the Humility of our Lord, to accept Relief from his own Creature. But, however, amidst all his Anguish he wholly resigns all to his Father's

Father's Will: *Not my Will, but thine be done.*

O Merciful Jesus, I adore and bless Thee for this thy Agony, for all thy Fears and Sadness, for thy Sighs, and Tears, and Bloody Sweat, for all thou suffered'st in the Garden; I give Thee thanks for these wonderful Effects of thy Love to Man; and beseech Thee, by this thy infinite Charity, that whenever Tribulation or Anguish shall assault me, I may receive it with a Humility like to thine, and with a true Submission to thy Father's Will: But especially, O Lord, remember me at my last Hour; when the Terrors of Death shall begin to seize me, then let thy Angels comfort me, then let the Memory of thy Sufferings support me against all Apprehensions, that no Fears of Death or Judgment may ever lessen the Hope I ought to repose in Thee. In the mean time moderate, I beseech Thee, by thy Holy Spirit all my Griefs and Joys, that no Excess of either Passion may ever remove Thee out of my Sight. Let not my chief Comfort be worldly, but in the Testimony of a good Conscience, in the Accomplishment of thy Will: And for my Troubles, whatever this World may bring me, let that still be my greatest, whereby I lament

ment my Sins, and grieve for having offended Thee.

He is taken Prisoner and carried before Annas.

SWEET Jesus, who am I, that thou the Almighty and Everlasting God, should'st offer thyself to Torments and Death for me, who deserved no Mercy, but Justice ; and for my Sins to be for ever banish'd from the Sight of Happiness ! But thus it pleased thee, and therefore thou gavest thyself a Prey to thy malicious Enemies, that came to seek thee : They were struck down by the Power of one Word to shew their Weakness, and yet thou wast taken Prisoner by them to manifest thy Choice and Goodness. Here a Traytor is admitted to kiss thee, and, notwithstanding all his Treachery and Ingratitude, is received with Meekness and Peace. I adore and praise thee, and give thee Thanks for this thy Humility, Meekness and Charity, and all those other Virtues practised for my Example, whilst thou wast in the Hands of that insulting Multitude ; whilst they seiz'd and dragged thee along amidst Reproaches, Indignities and Blasphemies, till like a meek Lamb amongst Wolves thou was brought before *Annas,*

Annas, where a vile Servant reproves thee, and in Contempt strikes thee on the Face. And here thou hast that Addition to thy Grief, to see thyself wholly abandon'd by thy Disciples, and left by them to the merciless Rage of thy Enemies.

O merciful Jesus, I beseech Thee, by all thou then suffered'st, to have Compassion on me, and deliver me from all the Bonds of Sin ; my Life is a kind of Slavery under thy Enemies ; the Devil, the World and the Flesh, have fastened their Chains upon me, and under their Tyranny I am dragged along, even to such Things as my Soul abhors. In how many Particulars does a weak Compliance with the World draw me out of the Ways of thy Gospel ! What Violences do I suffer from ill Customs ! And how does my interior Corruption push me forward to the Contempt of thy Law ! Look therefore, and have Mercy on me, O Jesus ; overthrow all my Enemies by the Power of thy Word, and force them to give Way, Deliver me from the Captivity of Sin, and break all those Bonds asunder, which do Violence to my Soul. May those Bonds, which tie thy Innocent Hands, obtain for me a true Liberty, that being disengag'd from all sinful or worldly Ties,

Ties, my Soul may delight in thy Commandments, and seek no other Rest but in Thee.

Jesus in the House of Caiphas.

FROM Annas my Redeemer is still hurried on to the House of *Caiphas*, the High-Priest of that Year ; here false Accusations are pressed against him, all which he hears in Silence ; here he is condemn'd of Blasphemy, and here thrice denied by *Peter*. 'Twas here, the Judge retiring, he was left all Night amongst the Soldiers ; and who can imagine the half Part of what he suffered from their inhuman Cruelty ? He is buffett'd, and spit on, till he is wholly disfigur'd, and left without shape or form ; he is made the Object of their Scorn, become the most contemptible of Men, and reputed as a Worm of the Earth.

O Jesus, I adore, praise and give Thee Thanks for all the Indignities offer'd Thee in this Night of Darkness ; I admire thy Patience, love thy Charity, and beseech Thee so to imprint the Remembrance of this Night in my Soul, that amidst all Reproaches, Injuries, Calumnies and Contempts, thy Meekness and Silence being ever before my Eyes, my Passions may be moderated,

moderated, and it may seem to me rather a Happiness than Misfortune, to have a Share in these Trials, which thou hast sanctify'd in thy Person, and shewn us how to value ; which being avoided by the World as Evils, are yet the Seeds of everlasting Bliss. Grant that in no Straights I may ever deny thee ; and whenever through Infirmitie I fall, raise me again by the speedy Succours of thy Grace, that knowing myself in my Weakness, I may likewise have a true Knowledge of thee, in the Experience of thy untir'd Goodness.

He is carried to Pilate and Herod.

THUS disfigured with the Soldiers Cruelty, he is early in the Morning carried to *Pilate*, and there stands bound before a petty Governour ; he is accused again by his own People of Blasphemy and Sedition, and bears all the Attempts of their Malice in a peaceful Silence. Thence he is sent to *Herod*, who, for the Hopes of seeing some Miracle, soon gives him Audience, hears all his Crimes, but hearing no Defence, condemns this Meekness for Insensibility, and sends him back to *Pilate*, cloathed in a white Garment, the Sign of his Contempt.

O ye

O ye Cherubins of Heaven, behold the Eternal Wisdom of God cloath'd in a Fool's Coat, come and adore your Lord in this Livery of Scorn: And thou, my Soul, enter in with this Company, and prostrate before thy Sovereign; the more contemptible he is, the more he deserves thy Gratitude and Love: If thou canst not behold him amidst the Splendors of his Glory, look on him now at least when all his Majesty being hid, there appears nothing but Mockery and Contempt; and let not thy Adoration be the less, because thou feest him humbled; 'tis for thy sake he is so. Thank him for what he suffers; and whenever it comes to thy share to be contemn'd, remember, however disrelishing it may be to Nature and Self-love, 'tis what thy Redeemer chose; and if thou pretend'st to be his Disciple, is the Disciple to be above the Master? If they have called him *Belzebub*, how much more those of his Household?

Jesus is brought back to Pilate, and Barabbas prefer'd before him.

WITH this ignominious Title and Livery of public Scorn, Jesus is sent back to *Pilate*; who, finding no Cause deserving

deserving Punishment or Death, endeavours to release him ; offering upon the People's Demand, to give him a Discharge : But they having little Regard to Innocence or Justice, and over-rul'd by the Malice of their Priests, make their Petition in favour of *Barabbas*, desiring Murder and Sedition to be set at Liberty, and Jesus to be crucified.

O Jesus, mercifully preserve me, I beseech Thee, from such Obstinacy and Blindness. I see here what are the Effects of violent Passion ; and that, when the Heart is once possessed and ulcerated with this Evil, it turns all into Corruption ; there never want Pretexts to trample on all that is Good, and persecute Virtue as if it were truly Vice. A passionate and corrupt Mind is a fruitful Source of all Injustice, and the most unreasonable Disorders : Deliver me from this Evil of the Pharisees, O Lord, and from the Weakness too of the People, that I may never yield to what is sinful and unjust, upon the Sollicitation of others : That Love for Virtue, I know, is too feeble, which only then keeps within the Bounds of Duty, when it has no Encouragement to transgress them. And yet how often do I miserably fall into this Weakness, nay, into this Blindness too, whilst turning but with

with a passing Glance on my past Life, I see there the many times I have prefer'd thy Creatures, the World, my Satisfaction or Interest, before Thee. O Lord, I have chosen *Barabbas*, and abandon'd Jesus! I have fallen into the Crime of the *Jews*, and have now greater reason to condemn my own Treachery and Ingratitude, than their Wickedness. They knew not what they did, but I have no such Plea. But however, I have still thy Goodness to appeal to; 'tis there I now make my Address; and tho' my Sins are without number, I yet have a Confidence in the Sufferings of my Redeemer, and hope through them to obtain Mercy, of which, of myself, I confess I am altogether unworthy.

He is Scourged at the Pillar.

PI^LA^TE still continues his Endeavours to deliver Jesus from the Malice of the *Jews*, and therefore commands him to be tied to a Pillar, and to be there scourg'd in the sight of his Enemies, hoping with this Punishment of a Slave to satisfy their Rage, and thus take him out of their Hands.

Most dear Redeemer, whilst I behold Thee at the Pillar, there exposed to Confusion, and left to the Mercy of those cruel

cruel Executioners, I see there the Immensity of thy Love for us, and the Greatness of our Sins against thee. I see there the Slavery, into which we were degraded ; and in thy Wounds, the Punishment due to our Crimes. 'Tis we that had offended, and thou suffer'st for our Transgressions ; my Sins bind thy Hands, and every Stroke, thou receivest, is the Effect of my Iniquities ; so that 'tis I that drag Thee, and not the *Jews*, to that Pillar of Punishment and Shame. Hold therefore, you Executioners of Justice, 'tis I that have sinned and done wickedly ; punish not Innocence, but let the Guilty suffer. Thus the Knowledge of my Sins make me cry out ; but thou, O God of infinite Mercy, givest contrary Orders ; thou say'st from above, punish the Innocent, that those who are guilty may be at liberty, and escape the Rigour of Justice. Blessed, O Lord, be this thy Goodness to sinful Worms, and blessed for ever be thy Name, O Jesus : I adore Thee, and praise Thee for this thy Mercy : I will ever remember these Bonds, these Scourges at the Pillar : I thank thee for what thou here suffered'st ; I wish I could here mix with thy sacred Blood some Tears of hearty Contrition, that so I might obtain Pardon

of

of all my Sins ; thy Wounds cry out for Mercy, Mercy, then, O God of Goodness, have Mercy on me.

Jesus is Crown'd with Thorns, and a Scepter of a Reed put in his Hands.

THE Soldiers not content with this Cruelty, outgo their Orders, and twisting a Wreath of Thorns, fix it on his sacred Head ; and having put a mock Scepter of a Reed into his Hands, they then in Scorn bow down before him, and in Contempt salute him thus, *Hail King of the Jews.*

And thou, my Soul, canst thou now stand still and view thy Lord amidst this Rabble ! Run rather in, and prostrate before thy Saviour, give him the Honour due to him. Whilst they in Scorn, do thou with all possible Reverence, adore him for thy God, no less in *Pilate's Hall*, than above in Glory. Call in the Angels to thy Assistance, and joining in one Choir, salute him in the highest Strain, Hail King of Earth and Heaven. But whilst thou seest his Head pierced with Thorns, think sometimes of that interior Grief which pierced his Soul ; arising not only from the Contradiction he then suffer'd of the unbelieving *Jews*, but likewise from all Sinners,

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which

which is here signified by the Crown he wears. And whilst thou reflectest on this, resolve with Patience, and even without Complaint, to submit, not only to outward Troubles, but also to all interior Pains, which often are a Rack upon the Spirits ; to all Darkness, Driness, Uncertainties, and Doubts : And having consulted those alone, whose Advice is necessary for thy Direction, then cast thyself at the Feet of Jesus crown'd with Thorns, and there acknowledge 'tis just thou should'st be interiorly afflicted, who hast so often made such ill use of thy Heart and Thoughts. Think 'twas one Part of thy Coming into this World to suffer the Contradiction of Men ; to be disquieted with the Uncertainties of thy own Thoughts ; and that thy only Remedy of these Disorders, is to keep close to Jesus, who was pleased to be crowned with Thorns, to teach thee thus to suffer. O Jesus ! whenever I feel these Thorns, grant I may then remember thine, and from thy Patience learn, without murmuring, to submit to all Disquiets.

Ecce Homo ; Behold the Man.

PILOT still makes another Attempt in favour of persecuted Innocence ; and therefore, cover'd as he is with Wounds and

and Blood, and under all these Ensigns of Contempt, shews him from some eminent Place to the cruel Multitude, saying, *Ecce Homo; Behold the Man;* hoping by such an Object of Misery to soften their Hearts, and abate their Fury: But they still, unmoved and obstinate in their Wickedness, cry out, *Crucifie, Crucifie, Crucify him, Crucify him.*

O dreadful Consequence of a Passion once conceived! 'Tis much more easily prevented, than moderated: No-body knows the Effects of one ill Action, and what Variety of Evils are often the Growth and Punishment of one: O Jesus, the *Jews* receive no Benefit from the sight of thy Torments; and if I, now in this Holy Time, contemplating thy Sufferings continue still unreformed, what am I but even a *Jew*, like them, insensible and stony! Preserve me, O Jesus, from this Obdurateness, and by this Affliction, into which thy Love for me has brought thee, give me Grace and Strength to amend. And thou, O eternal Father, *Ecce Homo, Behold the Man:* See thy disfigur'd Son; see what Extremity of Evils he has suffer'd for my sake, that from Head to Foot he is but one Wound; consider the infinite Merits of his Passion, and then I hope thou wilt look on me with Mercy.

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Jesus

Jesus is condemn'd, and carries his Cross.

PILATE confesses the Innocence of Jesus, and yet in a weak Compliance, and for fear of losing *Cæsar's* Favour, pronounces Sentence of Death against him, and delivers him up to the *Jews* and *Gentiles* to be crucified: Forthwith a heavy Cross is laid on his Shoulders, and under that Weight he goes towards *Mount Calvary*, till unable to move farther, *Simon the Cyrenean* is commanded to assist him.

I adore thy infinite Love, O God, in delivering thy Son to Death for us; and I thank thee, dear Jesus, for thy infinite Charity in accepting of this Death, and voluntarily offering thyself to suffer for our Redemption. But then those Sins I here most heartily detest, which are the Cause of thy Sufferings, those of all Ages past, present, and to come, and mine in particular; for all these concur to thy Condemnation, whilst thou offerest thyself a Sacrifice for all, and none can be expiated but by thy Death. 'Tis then the Weight of these, more than of thy Cross, that bears thee down; the Weight of our Sins are thy Oppression: Grant, O Jesus, I may never add more to thy Burthen.

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But thou goest on toward Death with thy Cross ; and in this I see, what ought to be the Method of my Life, if it be truly Christian. I must voluntarily accept my Cross, and carry it with Peace and Patience ; not only submitting to such Evils as thy Hand shall lay upon me, but likewise depriving myself of many Creatures, of which my Sins have render'd me unworthy, and my corrupt Nature makes dangerous to me ; as also suffering such Mortifications, as are necessary for preventing in me the Encrease of Sin, or satisfying the Divine Justice for what I have already committed. That Death likewise, to which I am hastening, I must consider as a Punishment, to which I am justly condemn'd ; which thou, my God, wilt however accept from me as a Sacrifice for Sin, if I humbly submit to it as the Effect of thy Justice, and as due to my Offences. In Union then with that Sacrifice, my Redeemer offer'd thee on the Cross, I accept the Sentence of Death, in whatever manner I am to suffer it, and all other Evils ; and now offer them to thy Divine Majesty.

But which of all these can I suffer, except thou takest part with me, and helpest me to bear my Cross ? Of myself I am weak, and wholly unable to go through with Patience.

tience. Help me then, dear Jesus, help me to bear my Cross ; comfort me in all my Sufferings, and ever support my Soul, that it sink not under the Weight. Whatever Uneasiness I find, I'll ever look on thee : I'll remember thy Voice where thou commandest, *Take up thy Cross and follow me.*

Good-Friday.

Jesus is Crucified

BEING thus arrived at *Mount Calvary*, Jesus is forthwith stretch'd out upon the Cross, his Hands and Feet are pierced with Nails, and with them fastned to the Wood ; and thus, with Shouts and Cries of the insulting Multitude, he is raised up into the Air, and in this Manner he offers himself a bleeding Sacrifice to the eternal Father, a Propitiation for our Sins, and those of the whole World.

And thou, my Soul, what wilt thou now do ? Stand awhile, and wonder at the prodigious Mercy of thy God. See and believe ; he that is become thus miserable, exposed to public Shame, reproached by all, now bleeding and tormented in ever Part, is God, the Son of God made Man for thee,

thee, and for thy Sins. Stand then no longer, but run in to thy suffering Lord, and at his Feet pour forth thy Soul in all the Extasies of Love and Praise.

I adore Thee, O Jesus, for this thy infinite Love ; for that thou art pleased to suffer all these Torments for my Sins. O ye holy Spirits above, come and adore your Lord, and praise him for ever : He has humbled himself to the Death of the Cross for us, poor ungrateful Worms, to redeem us from all the dismal Effects of Sin, and reconcile us again to his eternal Father : 'Tis my God that suffers, that a poor Worm may be happy ; 'tis my God that suffers, that he may redeem a Slave. Blessed be this thy Goodness, O Jesus, and now vouchsafe to extend thy Mercy to this poor, miserable, and unworthy Sinner before Thee. I confess my Sins have help'd to open those Wounds which were flowing with Blood ; my Wickedness and Ingratitude wound thee deeper, than those Nails which pierced thy Hands and Feet. But however, so has thy Goodness order'd it ; as thy Torments and Sufferings are the Effects, so are they likewise the Remedy of Sin. And therefore, tho' my Wickedness is a sufficient Terror to me, casting me even to the Brink of Despair ; yet when I consider thy Passion,

and behold thee, my Redeemer, bleeding for my Iniquity, and by an opprobrious and cruel Death paying the Debt due to the Divine Justice, this raises up my Spirits again, and lays the Foundation of such solid Hopes, that I have Comfort and Mercy before my Eye, and I can never more distrust thy Goodness.

Behold then, dear Jesus, I cast myself at the Foot of thy Cross ; I bring with me all the Sins of my Life, and laying them before thee, I here declare against them as thy Enemies and mine ; I beseech thee to grant me a true and sincere Contrition, that I may faithfully forsake them ; and with a firm Confidence I cry out, wash me from all my Iniquities, and cleanse me from my Sins ; let those sacred Streams, which flow from those Fountains of Life, purify me from all my Wickedness ; let them search into the Secrets of my Heart, and leave no Disorder there.

O Jesus Christ, my only Redeemer, let not the Fruit of thy Passion be lost to me. I beseech thee, by thy ignominious Death and pierced Heart, grant me now Pardon of my Sins, and preserve me in thy Grace, both now, and in the Hour of my Death. *Amen.*

O Cru-

O Crucified Jesus, Saviour of the World, let all thy Torments and precious Blood plead for my Soul, and secure me against the Severity of thy Judgments.
Amen.

Jesus, the good Shepherd, who with thy Blood feedest and healest thy Sheep, grant that the Effusion of thy Blood may be to me a Comfort, and the Remedy of all my Sins. *Amen.*

Innocent Lamb of God, who takeſt away the Sins of the World, I beseech thee by all thy Pains and Interior Anguish of thy Heart, spare me, and shew Mercy to me in the Day of Judgment.
Amen.

Jesus, obedient Son to God the Father, who so willingly submittedſt to drink the bitter Cup of thy Passion, and in thy Thirst hadſt Gall and Vinegar given to refresh thee, grant by all thy Sufferings, I may be ever humble and patient in all Troubles, and obedient to the eternal Father, even to Death. *Amen.*

Jesus, the High-Priest, who offeredſt to God the Father a Sacrifice without Spot or Blemish, for the making our Peace with Heaven; grant, by the infinite Merits of thy Passion and Death, I may die to the World, and live to thee alone, and

whenever I am to go hence, that I may depart in thy Peace. *Amen.*

Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, by thy Victory on the Cross over all thy Enemies, defend me, I beseech thee, from all mine: Deliver me from all Dangers of Soul and Body; Grant Peace and Unity to thy Church, Rest to the Faithful departed; to Sinners true Repentance and Pardon, and Grace and Mercy to all. *Amen.*

Jesus, my dear Saviour, the faithful Shepherd of my Soul, have Compassion on this Sheep that has gone astray, and run from thee. Open to me thy Heart and sacred Wounds, that in them I may hide myself from the Anger of my offended God, be protected and purified. Crucify in me my Flesh, with all its Vices and Concupiscences. Extinguish in me all Pride and Self-love, and whatever other ill Affections there be, that disorder my Soul. Renew a right Spirit within my Bowels. Strengthen in me my good Desires, that I may readily perform my Duty; that I may sincerely love thee, and faithfully serve thee; that I may never glory but in thy Cross, O Lord Jesus Christ, that the World may be crucified to me, and I to the World. Thou hast said, that when thou wert lifted up from the Earth, thou wouldst draw

draw

draw all things to thyself ; draw me then now to thee, O dear Redeemer, and let there be nothing, that shall any more separate me from thee.

And thou, O Eternal Father, look on the Face of thy Christ ; accept this Sacrifice he now offers thee on the Cross ; let that Anguish of his Soul, those Torments in his Body, that Blood which he sheds, that Death he suffers, be the Propitiation for my Sins : It was for these, he makes this Offering to thee ; and, O God, let not all this be lost on me.

Having thus put up thy Petitions, sit still a while at the Foot of the Cross, and there learn some Lessons, thy suffering Redeemer teaches thee.

I. **L**earn what Sin is : Thou generally framest some weak Idea of it, but far short of that Horror, which truly belongs to it. Look now on thy dying Lord, and see with what Severity God punishes it in his only Son, who undertook to satisfy for the Sins of Men. 'Tis his Life alone, more valuable than a thousand Worlds, is the only Sacrifice capable of satisfying for Sin. And yet how blind are Men, so easily to run into it, drinking down

down Iniquity like Water! must not they one Day, by this means, pull on their Heads the weight of God's Justice? Lay thou hold of this Remedy before thee, and sin no more.

II. Learn what is the Demerit of Man in the State of Sin, and what Obligation his Guilt bring on him. Jesus Christ is deprived of all things of this World, to shew that a Sinner has lost all Right to the Enjoyment or Possession of Creatures, and that, when he is deprived of them, he is then in that State, which is justly his due. Jesus Christ on the Cross is in a State of Ignominy, exposed to the Reproaches of the insulting *Jews* and *Pagans*, trampled on, even so as to be thrust into the lowest Rank of Men, which is that of Slaves. This is to shew us, that inasmuch as we are Sinners, there is no sort of Contempt, which is not justly our due for our Rebellion against our God; so that all we can suffer in this kind is infinitely less, than we deserve. 'Tis to shew us, that the undue enjoyment of Creatures, and desire of unlawful Pleasures, deserve not only to be punish'd with the Privation of them, but likewise with Pain and Torments: That these are truly the Portion of Sinners: And tho' our Redeemer was pleased

to

to take this Part on himself, it was not to exempt us from all Suffering in this World, but to deliver us from Pains everlasting, the Greatness of which ought to make us regard all that as inconsiderable, which God has left us to suffer, which is only temporal.

III. Learn not only, that what thou seest Christ suffer, is due to thee; that the Love of Justice ought to make thee love the Privation of Creatures, to love Ignominy and Pain; but likewise that in these three Particulars, so contrary to our Inclination, consists the true Remedy of our Sins. Our Evil consists in our immoderate Love and Adhesion to Creatures; the Remedy is to deprive ourselves of them, and bring ourselves, as near as may be, to that forsaken State of Christ Crucified. Our Evil consists in the Love of Pleasure; Christ Crucified shews us the Remedy to be in painful Mortification. Our Evil consists in seeking Honours or vain Esteem of Men; the Remedy is in patiently suffering Reproaches and Contempts. Thus tho' the Lessons of the Cross seem hard to us, yet they are Instructions for the Cure of all our Sins; and so much the more willingly to be received, as far as the Remedies prescribed are only short and passing, and yet are Remedies for the preventing

venting of everlasting Evils. The short depriving ourselves of Creatures is the Remedy against that eternal Poverty and Separation, to which the Damn'd shall be reduced. Passing Mortification, the Remedy of eternal Pains, and momentary Contempts, prevent that Confusion of the Reprobate, which shall never end. In this manner in the Cross is the Remedy of our present Evils, and of those to come; and if it seems difficult to our Passions which are to be cured, let the Consideration of the Evils, which otherwise wait for us, recommend it to our Practice, in rendering it more easy.

IV. Learn from the Cross the true Disposition, in which thy Soul ought to be; not only in esteeming the Privation of Pleasures and Honours a much more valuable Christian Good, than the Enjoyment of them; but likewise to contemn and have a Horror for a Worldly Life, which is ever searching after these Goods, and apprehends no Satisfaction but in possessing them. Whatever Evils therefore fall to thy Share, thou oughtest still to look on thyself a thousand times more happy than those, who are in the quiet Enjoyment of their Pride, Luxury, and Delights: What the World values as the greatest Happiness, thou oughtest to consider

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sider as the greatest Misfortune. And this thou art to learn at the Foot of the Cross.

V. Learn that Christ on the Cross is not conquer'd by his Enemies, but that even there is the Field of his Victory and Triumphs ; there he overcomes the Devil and the World ; but learn too wherein consists the Victory of a Christian. The Victory of Jesus Christ is wholly invisible ; there appears nothing to Sense, but one oppress'd under the Malice of his Enemies. A Christian then is not to desire any visible Effects of his Victory, or that God should grant him any remarkable Advantages over his Adversaries. His Triumph is in suffering to Death under all Attempts whatever. This is the Victory of Faith, not less real, because invisible ; 'tis this which belongs to all the Elect, of whom the Apostle speaks, *Every one that is born of God overcomes the World ; and this is the Victory that overcomes the World, our Faith.*

VI. Learn what manner of Love thou oweſt to God ; 'tis ſuch a Love as obliges thee to prefer his Glory and Interest before all Things, and to ſurrender thy Life with Joy in Defence of his Truth and his Honour. This is the Lesson Jesus Christ practises on the Cross : He gives his

his Life for the Confession of the Truth, after he had maintained it before *Pilate* and the *Jews*; he seals with his Blood the Doctrine he had preached, and thus becomes the Head and King of all Martyrs.

VII. Learn what manner of Love thou oweſt thy Neighbour; for 'tis for Men Christ gives up his Life, to rescue them from the Power of Hell, and open Heaven for them: He dies not only for his Friends and for the Just, but also for Sinners and Enemies of God, to make their Peace, and obtain Grace for rendering them again the Friends of God. Thus extensive ought thy Charity to be, not confined by human Respect, but wholly without Reserve. Consider too what thy Patience ought to be in this Point: Jesus on the Cross suffers the Reproaches of the insulting *Jews*, and their Cruelty provokes him not; he looks on their Crimes on the most favourable Side, as the Effects of their Ignorance, and not their Malice; his Thoughts are compassionate, and his Words peaceable; *Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.* See here the highest Degree of Patience taught thee by Jesus Christ.

VIII.

VIII. Learn the great Duty of offering Sacrifice to God, which Christ does on the Cross, and there providing for our Salvation, gives us Opportunity of offering ourselves with him. Man, as a Creature, was ever obliged to offer Sacrifice to God, and, instead of those Spiritual Sacrifices offer'd by him in the State of Innocence, his Duty, as a Sinner, was to offer to him his very Life, in some Recompence for the Offence committed against the infinite Majesty of God ; but that Sin which brought this Obligation on him, render'd him at the same time incapable of performing it. The Sacrifice due to God was for the Expiation of Sin, and ought to have been a Victim pure without Spot or Blemish ; now he himself was very unqualified for becoming such a Sacrifice, being defiled, corrupted, and infinitely disproportion'd to the Greatness of the Offence that had been committed ; he was obliged then to an Impossibility ; and 'twas in vain to substitute in his place the Blood of Beasts, with which God would not be satisfied. But, however, what was thus impossible to Men, and even to Angels, the Son of God made possible, by substituting himself instead of all other Sacrifices, and offering to his Father his Life, which was of an infinite Price, for the
Expi-

Expiation and Satisfaction of Sin. Thus the Cross is not only the Instrument of Christ's Suffering, but likewise the Altar of his Sacrifice. 'Tis there he offers the Victim of his Body, that he may continually offer it to God for all Eternity; and 'tis by this Holy Means, infinitely surpassing all the Thoughts of Men, he gives them an Expedient whereby to discharge those Duties, which otherwise were altogether impossible to them; that is, of offering their Lives to God, and making him a Sacrifice of Expiation capable of satisfying for Sin; for Jesus Christ, chusing them for his Brethren, admits them likewise into Part of his Priesthood, giving them Right of making an Offering of him, and joining to it the Sacrifice of their own Lives, which of themselves, being unworthy of being presented to God, become worthy and acceptable, by being joined to the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This Devotion, thus learnt from the Cross, we ought daily to practise, offering ourselves to God in Union with Christ, and begging Grace at our last Hour to consummate this Sacrifice in Union with his.

Jesus

Jesus expires on the Cross.

EVERY Action of Christ was of infinite Value, sufficient to satisfy the Divine Justice, and redeem Man ; and yet not sufficient, according to the Design of God's infinite Wisdom, who, being willing to evidence the Greatness of his Mercy and Love to Men, and give them a full Instruction in their Duty, was pleased, for a more plentiful Redemption, that he should die for them : His Death then was the End of his coming into the World, and 'tis to this we must acknowledge the Benefit of our Redemption. God gave him to us, that he might die for us ; what then ought we not to do for him ? What Effects ought his Death to have on every Part of our Lives ? And yet how much wanting is the greatest part of the World in satisfying this Obligation ? What Part has Jesus Christ in the Conduct of their Lives ? What Place has he in their Hearts and Thoughts ? Certainly there is something so surprizing in this Stupidity and Ingratitude of Men, in regard of this infinite Mercy, that 'tis not less wonderful than that Charity or Love of Jesus Christ, which moved him to undertake it for our Salvation. O God, if thy powerful Grace softens not this Hardness

ness of our Hearts, if thou renderest us not more sensible of this thy infinite Love ; thy Death, I fear, will be the Condemnation, and not the Remedy of our Ingratitude, and Corruption of our Hearts.

Jesus Christ then expired on the Cross, but not till he had fully accomplish'd the Work enjoin'd him by his Father ; *Consummatum est*, all was finish'd, nothing left imperfect, that was recommended to him. This is a Rule we ought ever to have before our Eyes ; and yet, however necessary, 'tis little thought on. The greatest part of Men, at the Hour of Death, have little of that done, for which they came into the World, and for which their Life was given them. The End of their coming here was to seek the Cure of their Infirmities, to work out their Salvation, and lay up Treasures in Heaven ; and all this is the least part of their Concern. The far greater number of Men stand in need of being admitted then to begin their Lives again, when they have made an end of living ; but this is not granted ; when once the Time is past, there is then no more Time. God then says to us, tho' in a different Sense, *Consummatum est*, all is finish'd, your Time is at an End ; that which now is not done,

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must for ever be left undone : Let us therefore adore in Christ this Accomplishment of his Work before the Hour of Death, and beseech him to grant us Grace for the finishing of ours.

Jesus Christ having given up the Ghost, 'twas a terrifying Surprize to the Devils, who had push'd on the Jews to thirst after the Blood of Christ, to see him from the Moment of his Death Victorious and Triumphant over them ; to see their Empire destroy'd, and that they must for ever be subject to him as to their Master, their Judge, and their God. The Surprize of a sinful, unrepenting Soul, at the Hour of Death, will not be less ; when, having neglected all the Lights of God's Grace in Time of Health, and abused all the Effects of Christ's Death, it shall then behold Christ, whom it had despised and forgotten, and be convinced that then there is no Remedy left ; that the Grace formerly offer'd shall for ever be refused ; that it shall have no other Portion for Eternity, than to suffer the rigorous Justice of God, whose Mercy it had so long despised.

Grant, O merciful Jesus, that my Soul may never perish, for which thou hast laid down thy Life : May thy Death be Life to me, that by it I may obtain

obtain such effectual Grace, as to forsake all Sin, the Cause of thy Suffering, and in all Things be obedient to thee. O Jesus, make me a faithful Disciple of the Cross, that I may sincerely practise what thou hast there taught me, to be ever meek, humble, patient, and resign'd; and in all my Actions shew whose Disciple I am. O Jesus, be to me a Jesus, and save me.

Saturday, Holy-Week.

He descended into Hell.

THE Saviour of the World having expired on the Cross, and by his Death paid the Ransom due to the Divine Justice for the Sins of Men, descended into the infernal Prison, to deliver thence those just Souls who were waiting for their Redeemer, and were in a Condition of entering with him into Glory. 'Tis easy to imagine here, what Rage possess'd the Devils at this unexpected Delivery, to see such numbers of pious Souls, who till then had, like them, been banish'd Heaven, now rescued from their Captivity, and summon'd to prepare for a triumphant Entry into Heaven, whilst they knew their

their Sentence to be irreversible, and their Doom of Misery to be eternal. But if their envious Fury was inexpressible, so likewise was the Joy of those Holy Souls at the Sight of their Redeemer, who, having conquer'd Death and Hell, came now with the happy Character of a Deliverer, and demanded them from their long Confinement, now to take part in his Triumphs. 'Twas the *Messias* they expected; and he being come, they think all the Time of their Banishment to have been as nothing, beginning now to enjoy him, whom they had so long desired, and whom no Time can ever more take from them; their Tears are now dried up, their Sighs changed into *Hosanna's*, their Mourning into Joy, and no Thoughts of their Captivity remain on their Spirits. The same will be the Happiness of every Soul that dies well; whether the Evils and Afflictions of Life have been great or little, long or short, they all disappear at the Hour of a happy Death, and are lost in Eternity. There will be no Sense then of all those inconsiderable Accidents, which appear now so terrifying to us; and 'tis this only Expedient of imprinting a lively Idea of Eternity in our Hearts, that can take off the Horror of all Temporal Evils, and

and render them equally desirable with Comforts. When once Death approaches, and that Christ our Redeemer welcomes a just Soul out of the Imprisonment of the Body, all its Concern is at an End, and then past Afflictions only serve to add to the Satisfaction of its Delivery and Rest ; and where this Hope does not sweeten something, or, at least, moderate here all Excess of Disturbance and Grief, 'tis to be feared such a Soul looks not beyond Time, but has its Portion here only in the Conveniencies of this Life. Thus welcome then was Christ to the Souls of the Holy Fathers, tho' not so to the Reprobate ; the Comfort of the former was in these the Encrease of their Despair. And is it not a strange Misfortune, and most surprizing Blindnes of Men, to put themselves into such a State, that the Victories of Christ should add to their Misery, and the Encrease of his Glory be their greater Confusion ? But thus it must necessarily be with Sinners ; for in beholding the Excess of Christ's Suffering, they see there such an Abyss of Love and Mercy, so great a Desire of their Salvation, that this necessarily lays before them a full Prospect of their own Ingratitude and Blindnes, revives in them the Thoughts of all the Opportunities

pørtunities they have lost, and of the In-considerableness of those Trifles, for which they lost them ; and the Consequence of this is Rage and Despair. And thus it will one Day be with all perverse and impenitent Sinners ; Death will present them before their Lord, and beholding him, whose Love and Mercy they had so ungratefully despised, they will need no other Executioner, besides that of their own Consciences, to put them on the Rack, and confound them with a certain Horror, which, their State being unalterable, must last for Eternity.

Thus was Christ a Blessing to some, and a Confusion to others , in one of these two Ranks must we all be ; and this Determination entirely depends on that little Space of Life, while we are on the Earth. He that has not loved and served Jesus Christ in time of this Life, shall not love him for ever ; and he that has loved here, shall love him for all Eternity : All our Happiness consists in obeying God in this Life, and every thing besides is vain and unprofitable. 'Tis in this Point we must make our Enquiry ; and remember the Service and Love of Christ appears in our Thoughts, in our Desires, and our Actions : He that loves, thinks of what he loves ; he that loves,

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is concerned in whatever happens to his Beloved ; he is afflicted at his Misfortunes, rejoices at his Success ; he resents all Injuries offer'd him, is zealous for his Glory, acts for him, directs the Body of his Actions to him, and avoids every thing he knows displeasing to him. By this we may judge, whether we love Christ or no, and by this Love may be framed the best Judgment of our Eternal Lot.

O Jesus, thou knowest all the Miseries to which I am subject, all the Sins of my Life, and the War wherein I am at present engaged with my Corruption. I beseech thee, by all thy Sufferings, by thy blessed Passion and Death, to forgive me all my past Offences, by which I have most ungratefully provoked the just Anger of my God ; and now have such a merciful Compassion on my Weakness, that assisting me with thy Grace, I may pass through, with Patience and Courage, all those Difficulties, whether of Soul or Body, thou shalt please to ordain for me ; permit me not to yield under any Temptation, or any ways to be drawn into Sin ; that Grace thou hast purchased by thy Sufferings is sufficient for all this, however weak I am of myself : 'Tis in this I place all my Confidence, and now firmly

firmlly hope thou wilt so happily conduct me through my whole Life, that whatever Hour I am called out of this World, I may be sensible of the good Effect of thy Passion, and for ever rejoice in my Redeemer, who has died for me. *Amen.*

Easter-Day.

E P I S T L E.

1 Cor. C. 5. V. 7. ends V. 8.

PURGE away the old Leaven, that you may become a new Lump. We are to rejoice this Day with our Lord, for his Victory over Death, and for his entring into a Life immortal. We are to join with the Church in her repeated Allelujahs, and endeavour that no other Comfort at this Time take place of this. The worldly Soul rejoices in sensible and worldly Comforts, but the true Christian in the Glories of his Lord. This is the Day our Lord has made; let us exult and rejoice in it. This is one Condition required; but, for the worthy celebrating this Festival, we are to use our best Endeavours for the adding another; that

which the Apostle here recommends in requiring us to purge away the old Leaven, and become every one of us, as it were, a new Lump. If we have the Spirit of the World so over-ruling us, that our Actions are directed by the violent Impressions of Interest, Company, or whatever other Satisfaction that draws us from our Duty, we are very much unprepared for this Solemnity, and truly unlike what we ought to be. All this is the old Leaven, and must necessarily be purged away ; for whoever has not advanced so far in establishing God's Kingdom within his Soul, as to have there a Principle of Duty so prevailing over the interior Corruption, that the main Body of his Actions has now more in them of the Love of God than of the World, more of Duty than of the old Leaven, truly such an one is short of that Character which, St. Paul says, belongs to the good Christian ; and this is no other, but that every true Pretender to Holiness is not to be directed in his Life by Concubiscence, or any worldly Passion, but by the Sense of his Duty, and the Direction of the Law of God. Thus ought all Christians to be *Azimes*, as St. Paul advises, or *Unleavened*.

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But when this Corruption is thus weaken'd, that it may be now truly said not to command the Heart, yet something of it will still remain, which on Occasions will break out and infect many particular Actions: Hence the best of Christians experience sometimes Motions of Pride, Envy, Choler, Sadness, seeking themselves, and the Desire of created Goods; 'tis this Leaven, which thus remains, every Christian ought to labour by degrees to purge away; and that none may be discouraged, it ought to be remember'd, 'tis an Exercise that is to be the Employment of our whole Lives; for this remaining Corruption is as so many Roots under Ground, which are ever shooting forth, and if by continual Pains they are not kept down, they will encrease till they overgrow the Soul, and infecting the very Heart, will have it at Command, and render it incapable of bringing forth good Fruit. 'Tis indeed like the Violence of a Torrent, which will carry us along with it, if we do not labour, and courageously make up against the Stream. This is the Method of our living in this World, this the daily Task God has given us: And 'tis our common and indispensable Duty, as soon as this Corruption begins first to

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appear, presently to arm ourselves against it, and endeavour its Overthrow. Thus indeed our Life becomes a continual Mortification or Self-denial ; and indeed so it ought to be in all the sincere Followers of Christ, who are ever to be crucifying the Flesh, dying to Concupiscence and its Desires, and retrenching whatever may naturally serve to feed or strengthen it.

But whilst this is the common Obligation of all, is it not very surprizing to see not only Disorders amongst careless Christians, but likewise a want of Mortification, as also Variety of Failings, in those who seem sincerely desirous of correcting them ? And truly 'tis what is sufficient to convince them of their being wanting to their Duty ; if, upon examining into their Conscience, they find there they have not been diligent in watching over themselves, and making use of such Means, as might be proper for their Amendment, since all that must then be charged on them, as the Consequence of their Indifferency and Neglect.

Tho' I cannot but hope too, there are many Christians, who have a sincere Desire of renouncing all whatever is in them displeasing to God, and pray daily for this End ; and yet at the same time can observe

serve no sensible Amendment, but are still discovering new Failings in themselves. This may easily be in well - meaning Souls, who labouring daily in the Affairs of their Salvation, obtain by this means Encrease of Knowledge and Inward Light ; this Light makes them more discerning and quick-sighted than before ; and hence, discovering more Sins than formerly, they are inclined to fear that they lose Ground, that their Devotion are fruitless, and they are often drawn so far into the Snare, as even to think of leaving them, and returning to their former Method. Upon this, Variety of disquieting Thoughts raises a Storm within them, and they stand in need of a skilful and prudent Director to preserve them from Shipwreck, whose Care it ought to be to make them sensible, that the Faults that trouble them are not new ; that the Tepidity and Negligence of their former Life was the Occasion of their not seeing them at that time, or at least of being unconcerned at them ; that the discovering them now, is an Evidence of their being advanced in the spiritual Way, and having a greater Concern for their Salvation than formerly. And if, upon the View of them now, they frame a true Judgment of their Misery and Weakness,

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sincerely humbling themselves at the Consideration of the great Distance they are from God ; this Humility, joined with Endeavours of reforming themselves, is certainly a great Progres in a Christian Life, and what ought to lay the Foundation of solid Comforts : For, truly, as the Condition of our State is here, the Perfection of this Life is not so much in being free from all Imperfections, as in the sincere Desire of mastering them, and being humble under such Failings, as we sincerely endeavour, and yet do not overcome.

Let us then, as the Apostle advises, purge away the old Leaven, permitting no Corruption in ourselves, which is criminal, or any ways likely to hazard our Salvation ; and for other Failings, it is to be the Busines of our Lives ever to strive against them ; and in this, O Jesus, let it be the Effect of thy Grace, that we hold on with Patience, and fight with Courage to the End.

Easter-Day.

G O S P E L.

Mark, C. 16. V. 1. ends V. 7.

HE is risen, he is not here. The Resurrection of Christ is the Accomplishment of Man's Redemption. He died for our Sins ; he rose again, that we might be cloathed with a new Justice, such as may establish us in a Life of Virtue, and preserve us from the Danger of our own Corruption. This Mystery is the Confirmation of our Faith ; that we shall one Day rise from the Dead to a Life Immortal ; a Life, to which Sin and Death can have no Access : The Yearly Celebration of it is, to revive this Faith in us, and to put us in mind of obtaining such an Establishment in Virtue against all sinful Relapses, as may be a Preparation for that Unchangeable State hereafter. For this end, the Church calls upon us to arise with Christ ; and that, as Christ dying once, died no more ; for that Death had now no Power over him, so we ought to rise from Sin, and sin no more ; that we ought to renounce all Impiety and worldly Desires, and live soberly, piously, justly, in

Expectation of the Coming of our Lord ; that we ought to seek the Things that are Above, and not the Things on Earth ; and that thus only we can duly celebrate this Festival, and hope to rise with Christ in the Resurrection of the Just.

The Solemnity is great, and our Obligation, you see, is likewise great ; not to be satisfied by abstaining only from servile Works, for so far the Beasts may go ; nor by dissolute Joy, or plentiful Tables, for thus the Heathens honour their Gods ; but by putting on the new Man, and living as the Children of Light, sanctified by the Blood of Christ. Christ was Crucified, that the Body of Sin might be destroy'd, and we no longer be the Servants of Sin. This was the End of Christ's Sufferings, and it ought to be our great Concern, that this Effect be found in us : For to go on now in Sin, if it be not a Reproach to Christ's Passion, 'tis an Argument at least of our having no Part in it. And what State can there be more miserable, than for a Christian to be found still a Captive to Sin, after Christ has given his Blood for his Ransom from Sin ?

As the Angel therefore said to the Women, this Day, looking for Christ among the

the Dead, *Surrexit, non est hic*; *He is risen, he is not here*; so the State of every Christian ought to be such on this Day, that, as to all wilful and affected Sin, it may with Truth be said of him, *Surrexit*; *He is risen, he is not here*. The past Time ought to suffice for Sin; and now, as to what remains, all ought to live to the Will of God. This it is St. Paul says to the *Corinthians*; You have been Sinners, but now you are washed; now you are sanctified, now you are justified in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ: You have been Darkness, but now you are Light in our Lord; walk therefore as the Children of Light. This is the Fruit of Christ's Passion, which ought to be found in every Christian; this it is, which the present Solemnity of the Resurrection demands of every one in particular; and where-ever this is not, such are not the Children of God, nor have any Part in Christ, and the Resurrection of our Lord, which is a Day of Joy to repenting Sinners: What must it be to such as obstinately or carelessly abide in Sin, but a Day of Reproach and Confusion, even a Beginning of that Confusion which, if not timely prevented, will be Eternal? For where the Mercies of a Redeemer do not raise

raise from the Grave of Sin, what can be expected, but to lie buried in Sin for ever?

Wherefore, it being a common Interest to escape this Confusion, 'tis plain, it can be no other way effected, than by rising with Christ from Sin, and beginning the Life of the New Man. And, because the Weight of our Corruption is a general Hindrance to this Work, and the Occasion of its being left unfinish'd, tho' often begun; therefore 'tis our present Duty to consider of Means proper for carrying it on. Our present Gospel furnishes us with some in the Example of the Holy Women, who went this Day to visit the Sepulchre of our Lord.

The first is that of their Sincerity: They make a Provision of Perfumes; they rise early in the Morning to carry them to the Sepulchre; they think not of the Inconvenience of going alone, and having none in their Company capable of rowling away the Stone: This Difficulty occurs to them upon the Way, but they are not discouraged, but pursue their Journey with a Hope in Providence. Thus they go on, following the impetuous Motions of a sincere Heart, without Regard to any of those Precautions which human and wary Prudence might

might have suggested ; and what is the Success ? They find the Stone removed from the Mouth of the Sepulchre, and are assur'd of Christ's being Risen from the Dead, by two Angels that appeared to them ; and are order'd to give Notice of it to the Apostles. Thus have they the first News of the Resurrection, and, by Commission from Heaven, are made the Apostles of it to the Apostles.

Now, if we consider this Disposition of their Minds, 'tis plain, they had not a lively Faith of Christ's Resurrection, nor in those Words, by which he foretold it, because they thought him Dead ; but it being the Trouble at Christ's Death, which seizing their Spirit, made them incapable of reflecting, or thinking of any thing else : And they, at the same time, following the Dictates of a Sincere Love, in resolving to express the Honour they had for him, supposed Dead, in the best manner they could ; Christ distinguishes betwixt the Effects of human Weakness in them, and the Sincerity of their Love, in bearing with the one, and recompensing the other.

A like good Effect will those Christians find, who with a like Sincerity seek their Lord. If they are sensible of

of their Wants, and upon true Desires of Amendment, strongly apply themselves to undertake whatever appears to them grateful to their God ; such a Disposition cannot fail of meeting with Blessings from his Hand, who cannot stand against the Endeavours of a Fervent and Single Heart, but will shew them Mercy, in bearing with their Infirmities, in removing their Difficulties, in perfecting their Faith, and giving Light to their Darkness ; *Exortum est in Tenebris Lumen rectis Corde.* And tho' there appears something in these, which may not suit with the Maxims of human Prudence, and may therefore draw upon them the Reproach of Indiscretion ; yet I think their Folly is more to be valued, than the Prudence of others, who, by their great Cautiousness, and irresolute Deliberations, lose many Opportunities of doing Good ; and by the Foresight of Difficulties, are discourag'd from undertaking, what others go through, carried on by the Force of Sincerity and Hope. This Expedient of Sincerity, is so absolutely necessary in all the Affairs such as of a Christian Life, that the Care of Eternal Parents cannot be better employed than in working their Children from their wonder-Tender Years, into this Holy Disposition, by a steady and severe Discourag-eve th-

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ment of all, that seems to incline to Flat-
tery, Inconstancy and Lying. And those
of riper Age cannot better secure their
Eternity, than by not tolerating, but pu-
nishing these Evils in themselves.

This has a necessary Connexion with
another Help, recommended in this Gos-
pel, which is that of Diligence and Indus-
try in all the Busines of the Soul, and
is signified by the early Rising of these Pi-
ous Women, that went to the Sepulchre.
There are very few, who have any De-
gree of Seriousnes in what belongs to
Eternity, but they see their Wants, they
have a Sense of their Failings, they de-
sire to amend, and make frequent Pur-
poses in order to it. And the great Oc-
cation of Miscarriage is from a kind of
Sloth, which hangs like a Weight at their
Hands, and hinders them in the Execu-
tion of their Designs ; by which their
whole Life comes to be a Succession of
Purposes, but not with Fruit answerable
to them. Now, by what means can this
lincerity, be remedied, but by greater Industry,
Affairs such as may bear some Proportion with an
Care of Eternal Concern ? Salvation is not to be
had than expected without Labour ; and 'tis no
m their wonder, if they advance not in the Way,
Disposi-who scarce takes pains enough, to be-
courage-eve themselves in earnest, in what they
mentropose ; but perform all Duties with such
Laziness

Laziness of Mind, admit so many Excuses and Delays, that one Reflection upon themselves, is enough to confound them with their own Indifference, and their undervaluing Heaven, in bidding so little for it. This is not the Way of the Gospel, and cannot be the Way to Heaven: Some better Method therefore must be taken, a Method of greater Resolution, of more Life and Vigour: For this is little better than lying still, and therefore cannot be the Means for Rising to a new Life. Inspire all thy Faithful, I beseech Thee, O Jesus, with a Sense of their Obligation; let the Difficulties of their Task awaken them, let their Danger quicken them, and thy laborious Example spur them on. And since this was the Day of thy beginning a new Life, give a new Life to all that believe in thee, that they may no longer Sleep in Death, but begin such a Method, as may be a Security against Sin, and give them well-grounded Hopes of Rising with thee to a Life Immortal.



Monday,

Monday, Easter-Week.

E P I S T L E.

Acts, C. 10. V. 37. ends V. 43.

GO D raised him up the third Day. Christ arising from the Dead is our Instruction at this Time, that whoever pretends to be his Disciple ought not to lie buried in the Grave of Sin, but with his Lord to rise to a Life of Grace, obeying the Summons of St. Paul, *Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the Dead, and Christ will enlighten thee.* None can be a true Disciple of Christ, who believes not what he teaches ; neither can any one seriously judge himself his Disciple, if he does not what he commands. He commands thee now, O Christian, to awake and rise from Sin : If thou do'st it not, how do'st thou belong to him ? For this End the Church now calls on thee, by Confession and a sincere Repentance, to purify thy Soul from all whatever can defile, and present it a pure Offering before God, if not without Spot or Blemish, at least so that there be nothing, that can render thee unfit to accompany thy Lord. It may be easily

easily known, how near thou art come to be this happy Soul, if thou consider'st thyself by St. Paul's Measures: *If you are risen with Christ, seek those Things which are above; set your Affection on Things above, not on Things on Earth,* Colof. 3. 1. Not that a Christian is entirely to banish from his Heart the Thoughts of all worldly Things; this cannot be in this Life, where our Duty in several Ways links us to this World; but that our Hearts be so posseſ'd with the Love of God, that using this World as Circumstances require, our great Concern and Sollicitude in the main Body of our Actions be how to perform the Will of God, and work out our Salvation.

This happy Temper in a Soul carries it on powerfully and sweetly in the Method of a Christian Life, spurs it forward to seek and approve all such Means, as are effectual for the uniting it more closely to its God, and taking all immoderate Affections off the World; and if this be by what the World calls Afflictions, Misfortunes, or Disgrace, it chearfully submits; not esteeming Things by their Relish to Flesh and Blood, but as they contribute to the everlasting Good, and carry it forward to that End. On the other side, it endeavours to entertain, with a sort of Jealousy

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Jealousy and Dislike, whatever strengthens her Affections to this World ; and therefore what others generally call Blessings and Happiness, she apprehends as dangerous, ever experiencing the Satisfaction of temporal Things to be as a certain Weight, which draws her down, and is still apt to remove her at a greater Distance from her God. And then, if she observes any violent Inclinations within, or unhappy Circumstances without, which are the Occasions of her Sin, her whole Care and Sollicitude is for taking the best Advice, and using such Means as are proper for securing her against such Evils : She is neither tired in her most laborious Endeavours, nor discouraged at her own Weakness, or the Importunity of a troublesome Enemy ; but still goes on fighting and fighting for Eternity, dragging those Chains with Patience, which are the Punishment of her Crimes, and waiting when she shall be delivered from this her Captivity.

This is the Method, and these the Marks of a Soul risen with Christ ; and where these are not, I fear such a Soul goes not beyond the Ceremony of a Resurrection and Repentance. When a Christian, seemingly sensible of his ill State, has confessed and protested that

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he is sorry for what is past, and now resolved to amend, and yet afterwards pursues the former Method of his Life, neither governing his Thoughts, nor moderating his Desires, nor observing his Words, nor declining the Occasions of his Sin, nor taking his Heart off the World and its Snares ; such an one may have had Thoughts of arising to a new Life, but he lies still buried under the Earth, turns himself round in Corruption ; and if at the best he gets up, 'tis only like those Beasts, which rise out of the Mire to shake themselves, and so lie down again. And how far is this from truly seeking the Things that are above ! St. Peter gives quite another Character of a Christian arising from Sin, requiring that whoever thinks of this, should no longer live according to the Lusts of Men, but to the Will of God ; that the Time past should be sufficient to have liv'd like Unbelievers, to have walked in Lasciviousness, in Lusts, in Excess of Wine, in Rioting and Drinking ; and that now he should give his old Companions Occasion of Wonder for not joining with them as formerly in all their Disorders and Intemperance, *1 Pet. 4. 2.* These would be most convincing Marks of a new Life, to see Men

Men begin a new Method, to see an entire Change from all former Extravagancies and Liberties, and a Separation from those Companions who have been the Encouragers and Witnesses of all their Iniquity : And as by their Disorders they had before given Scandal to good Men, and been Occasion of their Wonder and Trouble, so now to see them give a like Offence to the ill ones, and make them revile their unexpected Amendment. And truly where this is not in repenting Sinners in their Degree, they have Reason to suspect their Fidelity ; since true Repentance cannot be without a Change ; nor any Amendment, where every thing goes on as before. Deceive not then thyself any more, my Soul ; for thou canst not deceive him, who is the Searcher of Hearts ; and if at this Time thou hast Thoughts of repenting, see it be accompanied with a Change of thyself, and with Amendment ; for otherwise, tho' Christ be risen, yet thou canst expect no Part in the Resurrection of the Just.

Monday, Easter-Week.

G O S P E L.

Luke, C. 24. V. 13. ends V. 25.

THEY discoursed together of the Things that had happened. The Subject of this Gospel is a Relation of Christ's appearing, after his Resurrection, to two Disciples going to Emmaus. These had not as yet a Faith of Christ being Risen : We hop'd, say they, that he would have delivered *Israel*; but now they seemed to fear a Disappointment. But however, such was their Love for their Master, that they could speak of nothing but of him ; this is the Subject of their Discourse on the Way ; and while thus entertain'd, Christ joins himself to their Company, tho' as yet unknown, and soon after opens their Eyes, to see the Unreasonableness of their own Fears, and to know him.

It is out of the Abundance of the Heart, the Mouth speaks. Hearts possessed with God, speak of God ; and where there is a Sollicitude for Truth and Salvation, this cannot be smothered, but it will discover itself, either for the Help of others, or in hopes of being improved

proved by some new Light. *Mary Magdalen* seeks her Lord, and not finding him at the Sepulchre, her uneasy Mind speaks its Wants, and makes Enquiry of those she meets. These two Disciples have their Desires on their Lord, and they communicate their Concern to a Stranger, that presents himself on the Way. And who is this Stranger, but Christ himself, who knowing their Sollicitude, answers the Earnestness of their Desires, in offering himself both to *Magdalen* and these Apostles, and in being his own Discoverer? So that they do not only find him by seeking, but even then have him, while they are looking for him.

This is not an Encouragement to discover all Resentments, or Uneasiness of Mind, to every one, that is thrown upon us by Accident; for this cannot be, without great Indiscretion; but only to raise in Christians a just Sollicitude of all that belongs to Eternity, and to manifest this Concern, in conferring with such Persons, whose Charity fits them for being Instruments of Good. This is necessary for all those, who can possibly suppose themselves under any Mistakes, as to the Doctrine of the Gospel; for Truth being necessary for bringing Christians to the Possession of the Eternal Truth, the Fear

Fear of being deceiv'd in what he requires of them to be believ'd, ought to make them sollicitious in preventing Mistakes; this Sollicitude ought to put them upon conferring with such as Providence offers, and are capable of giving any Light. And tho' the Fear of being disturb'd, and even perplex'd by such Enquiry, may be some Discouragement to this Advice; yet since there are many Errors in the World, and the Apprehension of Pplexity is alike in all that are Serious, this Fear ought not to have the Direction in giving a Check to all Enquiry; because then all would be bound up to the Errors of their Education, and none could be in a way of being deliver'd from the Misfortune of their first Darkness. Whatever therefore this Fear be, it ought^{*} to be over-ruled by the Gospel Command of *Seeking* and *Trying all Things*; and the Infinite Goodness of God is to ground in them a Confidence, that he, who has made Truth so much their Interest, and commanded them to seek it, will be a Guard of their Sincerity, and secure them against such Mis-carriages, as are the Punishment of Pride and Rashness. In a Search undertaken upon these Motives, the Blessing of Heaven may be expected, since he has given the Encouragement, who has been so often

often found by those, that sought him ; and has let it be no Loss to them, who even then sought him, while they had him. But as for those, who are afraid of enquiring, let them consider, whether it be not an Indifference to Truth, or worldly Considerations, that keep them back ; and whether, under the pretext of preserving an interior Peace, they may not be partial to Interest, and justly be punished by strengthening themselves in Error, while they pretend a Fear of being injurious to Truth.

This same Method of Conferring, is necessary for some particular States ; those I mean, which have Difficulty in their Discharge. This Necessity is grounded on the general straightness of human Spirit, which meeting with the InfirmitieS of Constitution, as in Want of Vigour, Weakness of Memory, Excess of some Passion, Nicenes, Sloth, or Self-love, or in Want of Reflection, is the Occasion of many considerable Branches of Duty being neglected, and sometimes no more thought of, than if they were no Part of their Concern. Add to these the general Partiality, to which we are subject in our own Affairs ; and that having a full View of others, we see ourselves but by halves ; and from these Heads there will appear a Necessity,

for all, in difficult States, to confer with others ; that by such Discourse, they may receive the Benefit of others Reflections, and by a Communication of Thoughts, encrease that Light which may help them in the Discovery of their Oversight, and shew them the Way to amend. If Christians had a just Distrust of themselves, and a Zeal for Duty, they would encourage such Interviews, which might be so many ways beneficial to them, and let these take place of those unprofitable, if not sottish Meetings, where, amidst Drink and Smoke, they gratify their idle, and too often vicious Humour, improve Curiosity, dissipate their Minds, and learn to be skilful Governors of the World, but not of themselves.

Upon the same Consideration, this Method becomes necessary for all States ; for tho' there be not a like Difficulty in all, yet there are Difficulties still, and such as cannot be better removed, than by this Way. For what Condition of Life is there, which has not the Burthen of many Obligations upon it, both as to Spirituals and Temporals ? And are not all these subject to great Oversight, Neglects and Injustices, such as are injurious to God, our Neighbour, or our Selves ? And is not such the Infirmitie of our Nature,

ture, as to go on very often blinded by Passion, Sloth, or Interest in such Ways as are either dangerous, scandalous, or unwarrantable ; obvious enough to others Eyes, so as to raise wonder in the Observers ; and yet, either not at all discerned by ourselves, or, at least, so little regarded, as not to be thought worth our Care ? Who is there, tho' pious and learned, exempt from this Partiality and Blindness ? And what more effectual for preventing or remedying this Evil, than by frequent conferring with others, upon the Subject of our State ? Such Discourses will awaken and enlighten ; they will raise Doubts, suggest Matter for Consulting, discover the subtle Workings of Self-love, Interest and Passion ; oblige us to make many Reflections, and shew ourselves to ourselves, by taking off all Disguises. Is not this Motive enough to recommend the Practice of these two Disciples, in discoursing together, since it may be so much to our Advantage both of Soul and Body ? This is the Method all follow in Matters of Concern and Difficulty, where the Success is not indifferent to them. Thus all approve it, and why is not the Practice more extended ? A general Reason is, because few are sol-

licitious to do well : But there is another prevails with some ; they are either sensible of their Doing what cannot be justified, or see enough, at least, to suspect themselves ; and therefore are afraid of admitting Discourses, lest they should be reprov'd, or have their Scruples increased in a Matter which their Interest or Passion cannot allow to be touched. And this, I fear, is the Case of too many, who, in the Choice of Directors and Friends, always except against such as they apprehend will make them uneasy, in freely censuring what they see deserves it, or in putting them upon denying themselves what they are not yet willing to part with. This is a Restraint upon the Communication we speak of, and opens a Way to another, which is as infectious as the Plague. But, how should it be otherwise ? The same Hand that shuts out God, lets in the Devil. They who will not make Use of those Means, which are proper for receiving Light and Visits from Heaven, must perish at last in the Darkness, which they love. 'Tis thou only, O God, canst preserve us from this Misfortune, by teaching us to be wise to Salvation. Grant to all this Wisdom, that no Fondness of Error, Vice, or the World,

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Tuesday, Easter-Week.

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may be a Bar to those Helps, which thou hast recommended for their eternal Good.

Tuesday, Easter-Week.

E P I S T L E.

Acts 13. V. 26. ends V. 33.

GO D raised him from the Dead. Christ being risen from the Dead, enter'd into a Life immortal and impassible, a new Life, separated from Creatures that had nothing common with the Corruption of the World ; a Life disengaged from the Ties of created Objects, and wholly fix'd on God ; a Life which secured him from all the Attempts of Malice, rendered him insensible of all Provocations, and put him into the Possession of an unchangeable Happiness. This Life is what at present ought to be the Model of ours, in some degree at least ; for otherwise we cannot hope to have profited by this holy Festival. The great Occasion of our Sins, of our being at such a Distance from God, and so much in Love with the World, is, because we are so easy in receiving Impressions from sensible and worldly Objects, and that we

are so wholly unacquainted with every degree of Impassibility, that truly every thing, that presents itself to our Sense or Fancy, causes an Alteration in us. Hence Interest, Ambition, and whatever Delights, have such a Command of the Heart, that they draw it quite out of its Center, disorder it with so many violent Motions, that eagerly following the World, it forgets its only eternal Good : Hence every Disappointment, Misfortune or Provocation, brings Darknes upon it, and destroys all interior Peace, so that it becomes in some manner deaf to the Dictates of Reason and Religion, and is only capable of being influenced by Passion : And thus, by being too easy and sensible, as to every thing that delights or exasperates, it is brought to a Precipice, and upon the least Motion is ready to fall into the Depth of Sensuality, Melancholy and Fury ; being in a Disposition of being led along by the Devil, the World, and the Flesh ; and this is truly the Character and Temper of carnal and worldly Men : But how unlike that of a true Christian, who has begun a new Life, and is risen with Christ ! for he, having fully possessed his Heart with the great Obligation and Interest he has in loving and obeying God, with the mean opinion of this World, and all that is in it,

it, that its Flatteries and Frowns are but very empty, light, and nothing, if compared to Eternity, by this means arrives to such a degree of Impassibility, that tho' he is not become wholly insensible, yet he approaches so near it, that he is little more than touched with those Objects, which are as a Violence on others, and draw them headlong out of the Way: Hence it is, that tho' worldly, carnal, and sensible things, often presents themselves to him, as Interest, Preferment, Esteem, and whatever is apt to gratify the Senses, yet they find him so harden'd, that truly they make little or no Impression on his Soul; 'tis much the same as to all the Provocations of Misfortune or Malice; they cause in him a passing Surpize, but are not able to move him from that Steadiness of Mind, which being built on a Rock, on the Foundation of eternal Goods, cannot be much shaken with such inconsiderable Blasts. 'Tis this inward Firmness and Constancy which secures a Soul, and renders it not so very easy and susceptible of Impressions from Creatures, and is truly a Christian Quality very suitable to this great Solemnity, making us, as far as is agreeable to our State, resemble our Redeemer in approaching to that Impassibility and Immortality, which are the glorious Endowments

ments of his Resurrection. For this reason it is, that as at this time I pray to be deliver'd from a hard and stony Heart, so likewise I make it my daily Petition that God would please to harden my Heart, and render it still more and more obdurate against all the dangerous and distracting Impressions of Creatures, that so being ever easy and ready in hearing and obeying God, this other Hardness may preserve me against all the Sollicitations of created things, which otherwise affecting the Heart, would likely draw it out of the Way.

There is another Quality in Christ risen from the Dead, of which I earnestly desire to obtain some degree ; and that is, as Christ in all those forty Days between his Resurrection and Ascension, was never heard to speak either of *Pilate* or *Herod*, of *Judas* or *Pharisees*, or even of that infinite Gloy he then enjoy'd in his Soul ; but the whole Subject of his Discourse was to confirm and prepare his Apostles for their Charge : So truly I desire to retrench something of my unnecessary and unprofitable Discourses, as perceiving there is nothing serves more to feed and maintain our Passions than these. 'Tis Self-love puts us upon speaking of past Troubles, because 'tis a Satisfaction to us that they are past. 'Tis

'Tis some remains of Hatred and Ill-will, makes us take pleasure in relating the Malice and Designs of our Enemies, and the Advantages we had over them. 'Tis a vain Complaisance in the Happiness we enjoy, is the Occasion of our so frequent discoursing of it with Delight: Thus generally some ill Passion or other is the Ground of what we say, and to humour and gratify some Weakness of our own, is the true End of most of our Discourses. This is very unlike the Example here given, which tho' it be so perfect that we cannot well expect to come up to it, yet truly while we pretend to be Followers of Christ, and to live according to his Spirit, we ought not voluntarily to indulge ourselves in such Ways as are contrary to him; but ever strive to overcome ourselves in all our Weaknesses, and if we cannot wholly master our Passions, at least 'tis our Duty to be very watchful in moderating them. Help me, O Lord, by thy Grace, in this two-fold Duty, that by the Strength of a new Life, I may with Constancy withstand all Temptations, and in all my Discourses seek nothing but thy Honour, and my eternal Good.

Tuesday, Easter-Week.

G O S P E L.

Luke C. 24. V. 36. ends V. 47.

TH E Y being troubled and affrighted, imagined they saw a Spirit. This was the first Effect of Christ manifesting himself to his Apostles after his arising from the Dead. He presented himself in the midst of them, and such was their Difficulty of believing, that they could not persuade themselves, that it was any more than an Apparition. This their Incredulity was necessary for establishing the Faith of this Mystery ; since not being credulous, there was a Necessity of most convincing Proofs for persuading them to believe it. This therefore was so ordered by Providence, in all the Witnesses of this Truth. The Women, that carried Perfumes to his Sepulcher, went with a Persuasion of his being dead : The two Disciples going to *Emmaus*, seemed disappointed in the Hopes they once had of his Resurrection : The Apostles, tho' prepared by the Information they had receiv'd, were not hasty in believing it : *Thomas* positively declar'd his Dissent, and that he would not believe it, but

but upon Evidence of seeing. Now tho' this was a Weakness in all, yet it was permitted for our greater Assurance. For had they shew'd an Over-credulity or Fondness in believing, their Testimony might have been question'd, in a Mystery so difficult to Human Spirit. But now being unprepared for believing, and yet so fully convinced of it, as to give their Lives in Testimony of the Truth; this renders them Witnesses above all exception. Then, if we add to this the Power, which Christ, after his Resurrection, gave to his Apostles, of working Miracles, and curing Diseases; and that they were Witnesses of these Effects wrought in the Name of Jesus risen from the Dead, we may say, the Lives of the Apostles, and of the first Christians, were an authentick Confirmation of the Resurrection.

We are therefore to give infinite Thanks to our Redeemer, for setting this Fundamental Article of our Religion in such an eminent Degree of Certainty, as equals and surpasses that of all other things in the World. For the Resurrection of Christ being proved, all other Articles are invincibly proved in it, for if Jesus Christ be risen, then the whole Gospel is to be believ'd; then the Church is to believed, which

which is promis'd in the Gospel ; the Old Testament is to be believ'd, because it is authorized by it ; in fine, the whole Christian Religion is to be believed, because it is all linked to the Truth of the Resurrection.

Now, while we see the Incredulity of the Apostles, and of the rest, thus remov'd, so that, what at first they imagin'd no more than a Dream, they afterwards believ'd with that firmness, as to make their Lives and Death the unquestionable Proof of their Faith ; have not we here some Reason to reproach ourselves of Unbelief, whilst, after so great Evidence, and amidst the Profession of Believing, we do not imitate the Faith of the Apostles, but carrying on the first Impressions of the Apostles throughout our whole Lives, seem to imagine all the Mysteries of our Faith, to be no more than frightful Apparitions or Dreams.

This must be the Conclusion, if Regard be had to the common Practice of those who are called Believers. For whilst all profess a Belief of an Eternal Life to come ; that this is of that infinite Concern, that all the Goods and Enjoyments of this World are nothing, if compar'd to it ; that therefore they are to be made serviceable

able to the Purchase of Eternity ; and that nothing less, than everlasting Misery is to be the Consequence of any other Management ; whilst, I say, they thus profess to believe, and yet in the usual Method of their Lives, there appears little or no Influence of this Faith, but all is carried on by the Force of other Principles, may not it without Rashness be said, that if they be not stupid, in reality they believe not, but take all for Imagination and Dream.

What other can be the Consequence, when we see Christians so careless and indifferent as to the Concerns of Eternity, as to lay them by upon meer Sloth only, and upon Compliance ; to give every Humour the Preference ; to trample upon the Commandments, for running after Trifles and Smoke ; to court the World and its Applause, at any Expence ; to prostitute all they possess to Inclination and Mode ; to forsake the Maxims and Spirit of the Gospel, which lead to God, and follow quite other Principles, such as Pride and Corruption have set up ? Can it be thought of these, they truly believe and understand what they profess ? If they understood and believ'd Heaven so much their Interest, would they forfeit it so easily ? Would the Provision for a few and uncertain Years have the Preference

Preference to a certain Eternity, and the Care of a Carcals take place of an Immortal Soul ? Did I see the Husbandman more sollicitous to preserve the Chaff than the Corn ; the Refiner laying up the Drofs, and careless of the more valuable Metals ; and all others making Chests for hoarding up of Pebbles, and exposing their Jewels and Money to be a Prey to every Hand ; then some credit might be given to this Proceeding : But while the general Method of all in their Senses, is to make that the Subject of their greatest Care, which they believe their greatest Interest, must it not be concluded, that either their Belief of Heaven is not what they profess ; or else, that they are not in their Wits, in letting the most contemptible Things of Life have the greatest Part of their Concern ?

Again, if they in earnest believ'd and apprehended the Torments of Hell to be endless and intolerable, and that there is no possibility of Relief for those, who are condemned to them ; but that they must be their everlasting Portion ; would not they be daily watchful in doing their best, for their Security against this Danger ? 'Tis plain, how nice they are, and fearful of every thing that hurts ; and their Aversion is such to Pain and Trouble here, that

that they spare no Care and Charge for remedying the least Uneasiness. Now would not the like industrious Care be extended for the avoiding Hell, if their Belief and Apprehension of it were real? Where they believe Dangers before them, they are ever at a stand; nothing can invite them in the Fire, to Precipices, or into the Mouths of wild Beasts; and while they run headlong into Hell, is it not, because they take that Fire to be no more than Imaginary?

Thus, if we measure the Faith of Christians by the general Practice, we find it to be very weak, both as to Heaven and Hell. To judge by their Behaviour, all looks like Phantom, and in this Perfection they seem to live. And in this Sense, I fear, it will prove true, that, when the Son of Man comes, he will scarce find Faith on Earth, but only the Profession of it.

Have we not then all reason to beg of Christ our Lord, that, as at this time he confirmed the Apostles in their Faith, and gave them Sense to understand the Scriptures, so he will now please to encrease our Faith, and give us a Sense of what we hear, read and believe; that our Faith may be as fruitful Seed in our Hearts, manifesting

manifesting itself in Good Works, and thus distinguish us from Unbelievers. Grant us this Grace, O Jesu; and since thou hast been so merciful, to provide us with such Evidence, as to raise our Faith above all Question, let this Faith have this powerful Influence upon us, that we may not bring this Scandal upon it, as to be reputed a Dream; but that we may in all things live according to what we believe, and give Proof of our Faith by our Works, by referring all to Thee, and providing for that happy State, for which we were created.

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